Edited by
Robert Burch and Massimo Verdicchio

Between Philosophy and Poetry

Writing, Rhythm, History

continuum

BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY

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The Tower Building, 11 York Road, London, SE1 7NX
370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017–6503

First published 2002

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THINKING BETWEEN
PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY

Robert Burch

Ever since Plato banished poetry from the just regime – ironically, in a dialogue that has itself an essential narrative structure, an *eikōn* at its "logical" center, and a myth at its conclusion – philosophy has looked askance at the poetic. Metaphors, figures of speech, dramatic flourishes may be thought to favor or hinder the exposition and promulgation of philosophical truths, but as a rule they are judged accidental to the truth attained. In the extreme version of this story, the accidental is cast as decidedly villainous. Not merely is "figurative language" so much "frippery ornament" to the essential tasks of philosophy, as for example Jeremy Bentham warns, but in its ambiguity and pretence to real reference, it is virtually "unclean," befuddling and upstaging the "majesty simplicity of good sound sense."[1] Thus portrayed, the true danger of figurative language does not lie in its being literally false but in its being a sham, a mere "semblance of thinking," a *Scheingedanke* in Frege's words, that comes on the scene unabashedly as if it possessed a genuine truth-value.[2]

Nowadays, however, this story is often told with a quite different plot, moral, and characterization. In place of the primacy of nominal reference, we are now advised à la Saussure "that signs, taken singly, do not signify anything, that each one of them does not so much express a meaning as mark a divergence of meaning between itself and other signs." Accordingly, "the ability of language to signify a thought or a thing directly is only a secondary power derived from the inner life of language" itself.[3] It follows then that metaphors and the like cannot be straightway condemned as obvious deviations from an original literal purity, and thereby as departures from "serious speech" and "truth," since on this account literal references themselves come into play only through a prior interaction of signs. This tale, too, has its extreme version. Linguistic meaning is not only said to originate from the interactions of signs, but this interaction is also held to be both "omni-" and "infinite," constituting a "differential network" in which "nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There is only everywhere

differences and traces of traces."[4] In this version of the story, the traditional role of philosophy – to make the absent, occluded "true in itself" totally present by means of the "literal" word – is played out as merely one more substitution within an open-ended interweaving of text. Traditional philosophy is thus deprivileged, not on skeptical grounds that its word falls short of what lies outside it, but because this story admits of no "outside" to the open play of significations, no positive entities, and no center to "arrest and ground the play of substitutions."

However familiar this juxtaposition of extremes may now be, if it is taken at face value and used to characterize what is at issue for thinking between philosophy and poetry, it proves altogether misleading. For it takes for granted that what is at issue in such thinking is a *relation* in which two discrete terms, philosophy and poetry, are to be brought together, compared, and ordered. Yet this is already to proceed in the traditional manner of philosophy. For it is to assume in principle that the "disciplinary," "textual" identities of philosophy and poetry are determined in and through a relational opposition in which one or other of the terms must inevitably be privileged as the positive term from which the relation is first posited. The privileged term will then serve to define the ground of the relation as such. Of course, traditionally, philosophy has claimed this privilege for itself in the name of "Truth." Yet even were one to reverse this traditional order of privilege, so as to valorize poetry over philosophy in the name of a superfluity of meaning, the same traditional assumptions and implications about the issue itself would remain in place. Consequently, in the first instance, we would be left with a "philosophical" reduction of meaning to truth in which the poetic dimensions of thinking were deliberately occluded and excised. In the second, we would be left with a "poetic" reduction of truth to meaning, which brings with it all of the traditional relativist complications, along with the problematics of deriving reference from sense. In either case, a genuine space for thinking *between* philosophy and poetry would effectively vanish.

It might well be argued, however, that this way of setting up the issue in the first place misrepresents at least one of the alternatives. To subvert philosophy's traditional role as truth-teller in the name of infinite semiosis and the superfluity of meaning is not simply to put poetry by default in the traditional place of privilege. It is instead to render the interplay of poetic and philosophical discourses ultimately undecidable, in such a way as to make untenable the assumption that their relational juxtaposition is absolute and original. Thinking between philosophy and poetry would occupy the space of this ultimate "undecidability."

The essays collected in this volume are intended as characteristic examples of such thinking. As such, they serve *by example* to define the *inter*play of philosophy and poetry as what (in Heideggerian terms) might be called *die Sache des Denkens*, the matter of thinking. They represent a wide variety of perspectives and concerns both within and upon the topic. Their collective purpose, however, is not to summarize the various possible "positions" that might be taken on the philosophy/poetry relation, or to indicate which, if any, of these positions is according to current fashion academically reputable. Even less is their purpose to advance (either directly through a sustained argument or indirectly through

the juxtaposition of the essays themselves) any one particular position as being the "last word." As it is construed here, thinking between philosophy and poetry does not so much represent a position as a "dis-position" to sustain the philosophy/poetry interplay. By means of a variety of concrete examples, we have sought in this volume to hold open the space for such thinking as the topic of our shared interest. The attempt, however, calls for a few words of introduction, if only to help clarify — albeit superficially and even tendentiously — the initial terms around which this volume has been organized.

By the term "poetry" we understand here neither exclusively nor even principally what in the current lexical definition typically falls under the rubric of "poesy," that is, metrical and/or imaginative discourse designed above all to evoke an aesthetic response, as opposed, for example, to discourse having as its purpose apophantic truth-telling. Without pausing to discuss this disavowal in detail, suffice it to remind ourselves that, since Nietzsche and Heidegger, no one can simply take for granted the divisions and determinations of the apophantic and aesthetic upon which this usual definition of the poetic turns, nor the ready equation of poetry with meter and verse that it posits. Instead, to begin with we understand the term "poetic" here in the broadest etymological sense to encompass the whole domain of *poiēsis* as that of the creative production of *meaning*. Following etymology, we likewise construe the term "philosophy" in a similarly broad way as *philosophia*, the love of wisdom, expressed in the quest for *truth*. In the broadest terms, then, as a tentative, working characterization we mean by thinking between philosophy and poetry, a discourse bounded by the interplay of meaning and truth.

Admittedly, there is a sense in which this initial characterization might seem to offer little or no advantage. If it served in effect *merely* to recast the interplay of philosophy and poetry as a relation between truth and meaning, then it would only serve to reintroduce under different names the very closures and oppositional relations from which we seek expressly to abstain. How we might avoid this lapse thus needs at least some explanation.

The case of poetry ought to be a familiar one. According to tradition, "the race of poets is divine," and as such does at least occasionally hit upon truth, if only by the unmethodical means of grace and inspiration.[5] In this regard, even the prosaic Aristotle concedes that poetry is "more philosophical and serious than history," insofar as it tells a "general truth [*ta katholou*]."[6] Traditionally, then, the issue has not been whether poetic meaning is related to truth but *how* it is related and how its claim upon truth is warranted.

The case of philosophy is less familiar, precisely because it is one that the philosophers themselves have tended to suppress. According to tradition, Pythagoras coins the term *philosophos* to denote one who "seeks for truth [*thēratai . . . tēs alētheias*]."[7] In offering this characterization, however, he uses a metaphor, that of the festival, *ta Olumpia*, with philosophers being cast as *theatai*, the "spectators," whose defining excellence is that they simply look at the Games in order to get the sense of it all. In the metaphor, the philosopher's love of truth is at the same time a love of "the finest sights" (*tōn kallistōn theōrian*), from which they glean a comprehensive meaning. Thus, according to this hagiograph, philosophy has situated itself from the beginning

precisely in the ambiguous space between the quest for truth and the quest for meaning.

The history of philosophy indicates various ways by which philosophers have sought to come to terms with this "between." Traditionally and in general, they have sought to reconfigure this space less ambiguously so as to make their meaning ultimate as truth. Arguably, this strategy finds its exhaustive and final expression in Hegel's panoramic attempt to sublate all meaning into the comprehensive Truth of absolute self-knowing knowing. His goal is to realize a singular, fully present Truth in itself in which the difference between meaning and truth is first presupposed in order then absolutely, essentially to be overcome. After Hegel, it might well be argued, all subsequent attempts to absolve meaning into truth are epigonic.

Yet there are other strategies for dealing with this "between" that are not so imperial, and in that respect are closer in spirit to the topic of this volume. Before Hegel, for example, Kant insists on the impossibility of an absolute resolution of meaning into truth, and does so in the name of an inescapably finite philosophy whose virtue is that it "limits knowledge in order to make room for *faith*" and "the *practical extension* of pure reason."[8] At the basis of this limitation is Kant's conviction that the quest for meaning and the quest for truth are not identical. We are possessed, he says, "of a pressing need that is yet something more than [*noch etwas mehr*] the mere thirst for knowledge."[9] Arguably, this "something more" is the "poetic" need to make sense of things as such and as a whole. In the end, however, Kant remains under the sway of the philosophers' impulse to systematic completeness, and hence posits as an ideal of reason a (divine) knowledge in which meaning and truth would be one. By contrast, Kant's contemporary heirs seem more resolute in their adherence to the division, and hence less receptive of the systematic ideal. Hannah Arendt, for one, claims that the interpretation of meaning on the model of truth is not just a "fallacy" of metaphysical thinking but the "basic fallacy, taking precedence over all other metaphysical fallacies."[10]

Although by no means an Hegelian,[11] Heidegger declares (in seeming opposition to the Kantian distinction) that the "'meaning of Being' and 'truth of Being' say the Same [*sagen das Selbe*]."[12] Considered out of context, this might seem to be just another instance of the "fallacy" that reduces meaning to truth (which is just how Arendt, for example, reads it {*T*, 15}). Yet, in Heidegger's vocabulary the "same" (*selbe*) is not the "identical" (*gleich*). In the context of a discussion on the interplay of poetry and thinking, he remarks: "The same never coincides with the equal [*gleichen*], not even in the empty indifferent oneness of what is merely identical. The equal always moves toward the absence of difference, so that everything may be reduced to a common denominator. The same, by contrast, is the belonging-together of what differs, through a gathering by way of the difference."[13] It is in these terms that Heidegger seeks to preserve the essential space that is the interplay of meaning and truth, not as an identity that posits difference in order to negate it, but as an integral sameness-in-difference that can never be *aufgehoben* and hence is *always already* in tension. In this way, he celebrates the poetic in thinking, yet without seeking to absolve the difference. Were it the case instead that Heidegger's thinking did simply

dissolve into the "poetical" without difference, including even the thinking that affirms the thesis that all thinking is poetical, Heidegger could not avoid the usual, fatal entanglements of a formal dialectical sort. But, then, if indeed *all thinking* were poetical without difference, then in a sense none would be, since there would be no other kind of discourse to mark the difference.[14]

Derrida, too preserves the difference of meaning and truth, yet in a more subversive way than does Heidegger – more subversive, that is to say, for the traditional pretensions of philosophy as a quest for truth. He does question the value of truth in the name of the superfluity of meaning, but not in such a way as to reinstate the sameness of truth and meaning for the sake of the thinking of Being. In Derrida's writing, truth is rendered as a particular mode of meaning. Yet it is not just one mode among others. It is the fetishist mode of meaning, of whose absolute appeal we have always to disabuse ourselves. "We recognize in truth," Derrida writes, "'the normal prototype of the fetish'. How can we do without it?" (*P*, 80, n. 23).

Although hardly exhaustive, the preceding gloss does help to establish a context for the present volume. Insofar as the essays in this volume share a commitment to preserving the space of thinking between philosophy and poetry, they eschew the philosophers' imperial strategy to absolve truth of all dependence on meanings it does not exhaustively "comprehend." Among the essays, however, there is no uniformity of voice with respect to the "whither" and "wherefore" of the alternative. Moreover, although each of the essays moves within that "space" and is an example of such thinking – indeed this is their shared topic – they do not all directly thematize that space or that thinking.

The essays in this volume are arranged in four sections according to the following themes: (1) *Ethics of Writing*; (2) *Truth, Texts, and the Narrative Self*; (3) *Poetry, Philosophy, and the Spirit of History*; and (4) *The "Force of Rhythm" in Life, Philosophy, and Poetry*. The essays in Part One are devoted to the work of the Italian philosopher Carlo Sini, as exemplifying well the nature and diversity of the interplay between philosophy and poetry. In his own contribution to this section, Sini argues that terms like "poetry," "philosophy," "history," and "prose" are basically genres of the *written* word, "mystified" forms of knowing introduced with alphabetic practice. He nonetheless views writing as an exercise which affords the subject the possibility to view itself "in its event of meaning," so as to gain a new genealogical comprehension of itself. This new comprehension is ultimately the product of the imminent and immanent end of metaphysics. It yields what Sini calls the "world-sheet" (*foglio-mondo*), a genealogical display of the practice of writing to itself in the reflection of its peculiar writing effects.

The two other essays in this section take as their starting point this post-metaphysical analysis of writing and orality, and proceed from that locus in two directions. In one case, a trajectory is traced from Sini's account of the transition from orality to writing to show how in diverse ways this transition has served to affect and effect the evolution of thinking, from the Galilean mathematization of reality and the Cartesian modelization of nature to the present experience of digitalization. In a postmetaphysical context of infinite semiosis, a response to this transition can be found in the poetic invocation of the

Delphic injunction, yet understood now as a call to unending self-interrogation. The other trajectory is to show in a concrete analysis of poetry how Sini's postmetaphysical thought addresses directly the problematic of thinking between philosophy and poetry as the locus of the event of meaning and as the "space" wherein the subject gains a genealogical knowledge of itself.

The essays in Part Two are framed in terms of two interrelated issues. The first issue concerns how "identity" is to be conceived in relation to difference, alterity, otherness, against the background of the metaphysical conception of identity as negation of negation. In that conception, which receives its fullest expression in Hegel's philosophy, difference is contradiction, yet "contradiction," as Derrida observes, "constructed in such a way as to permit its resolution within dialectical discourse, in the immanence of a concept capable of its own exteriority" (*P*, 74, n. 14). Difference thus turns out to be only a moment of *self*-identity, destined to be superseded in an absolute conceptual self-possession.

Each essay in this section is concerned in one fashion or another with the issue of "identity and difference" specifically in its postmetaphysical, post-Hegelian formulations, that is, where the possibility of absolute self-possession is radically in question. Moreover – and this is the second issue that serves to focus this section – in its postmetaphysical, post-Hegelian formulations, the question of identity is inseparable from the hermeneutic, poetic question of the constitution and dissemination of textual meaning. Thus, each essay is concerned with identity – the identity of self, of genders, of truth, of meaning – as inextricably a "textual" question which has, as we have come to learn, *pas du dehors*.

The essays in Part Three are concerned with readings of a literary text or an *œuvre* in such a way as to problematize not only the act of reading itself but also the performative potential of the text and its ability to posit itself with respect to the referential claims it inevitably makes. In this regard, each reading serves in its own way to raise and make problematic the whole issue of thinking between philosophy and poetry as an undecidable space. Whereas philosophical texts traditionally seek refuge in the "scientific" certainty of the supposed "literal" word, and achieve an apparent closure in an interplay of occlusions and visibility, a more rhetorical reading dismantles this presumption to closure to reveal an inevitable superfluity of meaning to the text. Conversely, with respect to texts traditionally characterized as "literary," the readings problematize their referential character, within the determining context of meaning. The texts in question are drawn from Beckett, from Heidegger on Hölderlin, and from Rilke and Nietzsche.

The essays in Part Four concern the issue of rhythm in various modes – the rhythms of modern life; the "choral" rhythms of poesy; the musical rhythms of philosophy. According to the conception of rhythm that prevails in current literary theory and criticism, rhythm is defined generally and abstractly as a demarcation of a continuity. But this definition represents only a faint echo of the original sense of rhythm. To be sure, in ancient thought "rhythm" did mean the measured movement and tempo of prose and verse.[15] But it also meant proportion or symmetry of parts, and hence the form or shape of things. More generally, rhythm meant to the ancients, arrangement and order, and hence the

state or condition of a thing, particularly the temper and disposition of a person. Thus, for example, Plato has all of these connotations in mind when he declares that "the whole of human life has need of rhythm."[16]

Something of this ancient sense of rhythm survived in the Romanticist response to the rhythms of burgeoning industrial society (although in a way unattuned or repelled by what might be awing or even exhilarating in those rhythms). It survives as well, so Nietzsche tells us, in the contemporary habit among some philosophers of invoking verse to lend ideas force and credibility. It survives too in the deliberate rhythms and cadence of the work of certain poets and thinkers. What the essays in this section have in common is the conviction that rhythm is a central concern, having to do with the relation of our language and body, the fundamental character of our thinking, and the very tenor and tone of our lives.

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PART ONE

ETHICS OF WRITING

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INTRODUCTION

Massimo Verdicchio

This first section is devoted to the philosophy of Carlo Sini. The first essay by this major Italian philosopher presents in general terms the latest direction taken by his thinking toward a critique of metaphysics and of the fundamental genre distinctions between poetry, philosophy, and history. These are basically genres of the written word and as such are metaphysical and mystified forms of knowing which have come into being with the introduction of alphabetic practice. To be sure, Sini does not dismiss writing or the philosophical practice it produces, but defines it as an exercise that affords the subject the possibility of viewing itself "in the event of meaning," of acquiring a "new genealogical comprehension of itself." This new comprehension, which entails the imminent end of metaphysics, is what constitutes for him the "ethical" nature of philosophy.

Poetry, on the other hand, differs from philosophy as it has always contested writing by maintaining a constant relation to the archaic model of orality. As poetry aims at translating the singing of the living voice, the poet refers to lived experience directly and not instrumentally. But while poetry and philosophy are distinct they are not opposed and exist side by side. They share in the ethical revolution that Sini summarizes in the expression "world-sheet" (*foglio-mondo*) which entails the genealogical display of the practice of writing that makes it possible for the metaphysical subject of writing to watch itself in the reflection of his peculiar writing effects. "World-sheet" is an ethical exercise, the experience of an impossible transcription that releases the subject from his subordination to logical superstition with the purpose of "educating" it to live where it is according to the time and destiny of the world and its nihilistic consequences. The subject is no longer the reflection of practices pursued and of objects produced but the subject of practices committed to the meaning and destiny of its own existence.

The essays by Carrera and Williams illustrate different aspects of Sini's postmetaphysical analysis. Carrera expands on Sini's critique of metaphysics which originates in alphabetic writing and arises out of an investigation of alphabetic writing practice of the type never pursued by Derrida. Philosophical concepts have meaning only within the writing practice that produces them, where by practice is not meant a transcription of the world but writing itself. Sini's critique of Western metaphysics, including Heidegger's and even Derrida's, questions the binary logic which informs philosophical practice. In

Heidegger, for example, the question of truth is decided in the opposition between truth of logic and truth of Being as *alētheia*. Unconcealedness for Sini, however, does not arise against the background of concealedness of Beings but by getting rid of *mimēsis*, the analogic impurity that taints the origins of writing.

Sini is also critical of Derrida's grammatology since the notion of arch-writing, which is supposed to be an instance of nonmetaphysical thinking, does not escape similar pitfalls. Arch-writing presupposes the affirmation of traces as something which is not an object and cannot be brought into presence. This strategy resembles that of any negative theology where the signified (God) remains irreducible to any signifier striving towards it. The issue is not the content of the logical form but how it appears in writing, how writing gives shape to what we later call logical and meaningful. What Sini calls "ethics of writing" is the acknowledgment of the finiteness of every practice as a finite and limited enactment of the sign.

Ethics, furthermore, must be understood in the Peircean sense of "habit" and "dwelling," as the practice of inhabiting the space of writing. As an ethics of transcription, it is the enactment of a sign-relation, a transcription of the world. In these terms architecture is a writing, just as Platonic angling is writing. But the ethos of writing is neither a description nor a deconstruction of writing, rather, it posits the question of the content of the event, of its threshold, of its ground. For Carrera, Sini's ethics of writing is best exemplified by Socrates' message and by his questioning of the Delphic Oracle, an interrogating habit that has to come to terms with its own endless self-interrogation.

The third essay by Forrest Williams presents another aspect of Sini's philosophical practice by showing how we can understand his conceptual language analogically. Williams deals with Sini's reading of Piaget's child-moon episode that recounts the experience of a child who, as he moves, feels he is carrying the moon along with him, and when he looks at the moon the moon looks back at him. For Sini the experience of the child exemplifies the Peircean sign-relation event that is neither private nor public and cannot be understood in terms of a duality, but by means of a bipolar process. The child expresses the reciprocity of primordial experience constitutive of our commonsensical conception expressed in the polarity me-here, world-there. Here a key element is "mood" which has a central and epistemic function as it founds and constructs the objective world of knowledge and opens up the world.

Another aspect Williams deals with is the relation of part and whole which Sini finds inadequate in understanding the child-moon experience. While for Sini we cannot speak of whole, it does not mean that there is no whole at all, that is, that there is nothing. The wholeness of experience figures instead as "null" (*nulla*) of the evident part-iality of that (particular) moon or child. The "null whole" determines the very identity of the part making it a "perfect-ed part," a de-finite, determinate part. For Sini a sign-relation is a sign of this or that particular object (for example, moon) and in the last instance a "sign of null," a null whole which enables the given part to be just the determinate part that it is. That is why, too, the child-moon experience is not in any way *im*perfect as compared to a perfect whole. Rather, the experience is "perfect"

because it is partial. Sini's notion of perfection refers to wholes that are always and everywhere partial by virtue of their negative, null-wholeness.

For Williams the root analogies to understand the type of experience Sini alludes to here can be found in literary criticism, in a language capable of thinking and talking about art. As examples, he chooses Dylan Thomas's "Do not go gentle into that good night" and William Ernest Henley's "Invictus" to show that a reading of Thomas's poem raises the same issues and can be understood in ways similar to Sini's child-moon episode. Both the content of Thomas's poem and the feeling it raises, or the commentary one can provide, cannot really add up to a *distinctive wholeness* of the *particularized* experience of the poem. The poem perpetually eludes us and is present so-to-speak only in its absence. It is an entirely "de-finite *part*" and a non-positive or "null" *whole*. The experience of reading the poem is similar to that of the child-moon relation since the poem like the moon is just as much in our responses as it is out there. In this experience self and object, reader and poem, are reciprocal moments or polarities. As in the child-moon episode, the poem is near in its farness and far in its nearness. Furthermore, the affects generated are but pale analogies when expressed in the emotions of the everyday world. At best, they are a source of raw material. The world that the mood opens up and reveals is entirely unique. One cannot name it except as that null and perfect-ed whole which is the poem itself.

On the other hand, Henley's "Invictus," an inferior poem, is for Williams an example of how a poem can be depressive rather than expressive, lacking completely the definite character that would make it "perfect." And as one would expect, Henley's poem has no affinities whatever with the child-moon episode. The analogical concepts of literary criticism help us understand Sini's conceptual language perhaps because in Art too, as Sini contends, one finds an essential place of experience similar to what we attain in experience and where what is attained is the null in its most pregnant definiteness.

Carrera and Williams help us understand and situate Sini's philosophy at the crossroads of the problematic between philosophy and poetry, writing and art. They show that philosophy viewed as writing practice and poetry as constitutive of an oral and archaic form of expression share a common ground of experience where the distinction between philosophy and poetry, as well as the genres themselves, are no longer operative forms. Their displacement allows for the possibility of an ethics of writing whose sole domain is the "world-sheet."

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1

GESTURE AND WORD

THE PRACTICE OF PHILOSOPHY
AND THE PRACTICE OF POETRY

Carlo Sini

Heidegger has often pointed out the nonoriginal character of aesthetics. Aesthetics is a philosophical discipline, just like logic and ethics. Metaphysics is divided into the doctrines of the true, the good, and the beautiful, and aesthetics is the science of the beautiful. These divisions, born out of the Platonic school, became canonized starting with Aristotle and have ever since then influenced our conception of poetry and, to a large extent, that of the poets by shaping their views on poetic practice. Against this tradition, Heidegger argued that the poetic experience of the word is far more ancient, greater, and more original than aesthetics generally makes it out to be. Poets like Hölderlin, Rilke, and Trakl are more or less conscious examples of this. This is the result of the nonoriginal character of metaphysics. The experience of the thinking word is, in its turn, far more ancient, greater, and original than metaphysics ever thought.

According to Heidegger, it is a question of rediscovering the unifying stock that, starting from the original experience of the word, joins thinking and poetizing together, while keeping them distinct. Generally speaking, this unifying stock is constituted by the evocative nature of the word which is at the same time re-memoration, commemoration and revelation of Being. The poetic word celebrates the giving of Being to beings and at the same time its withdrawing from any communicative bind. The poet speaks of the divine as absence which in giving itself to the presence of the poetic word remains absent. The poetic word approaches what is far by leaving it essentially distant, a source of light whose origin remains hidden in the *phusis* that in giving itself withdraws into darkness. On the other hand, the thinking word focuses on this blind spot of vision that makes possible and gives the very same vision of beings. Having renounced the claim to capturing beings and their truth in definitions and logical-scientific information, thinking tries rather to correspond to the constitutive withdrawing of Being, to the *lēthē* which is the hidden core of its *alētheia*.

How this is possible remains problematic. Except for comprehending the

evocative nature of the poetic word of which it speaks, thinking is not able to show that constitutive difference which, neither rationally nor irrationally, makes it nonetheless thinking and not poetry. Thus, as Heidegger says, the essential poverty and present marginality of thinking, and its merely "preparatory" character is preparatory to the event of the thinking word, that is no more than a possible future destiny, and very uncertain as to the "how" and the "when." In case of its advent, it would entail a radical transformation of the relationship between man and Being, and thus between man and worldly beings, and would entail also a radical transformation of man's very being, marking his way out of the metaphysical, humanistic, and technical age.

I have alluded in synthesis to the above thesis, as I am persuaded that its potential is beyond doubt. It helps us overcome the prejudices of metaphysics and aesthetics. Despite this, my belief is that in this thesis there is a considerable margin of prejudice, which does not allow us to see deeply into the matter and arrive at a positive solution. This is not the ideal moment to discuss and criticize Heidegger's position, which I consider inadequate. I will try to confront the problem and formulate it from a different point of view, which implicitly entails the criticism that has been here omitted.

To begin with, I would like to mention an event that is well known to everybody. In the fifth century B.C., under Pisistratus, the two epic poems ascribed to Homer by our tradition were written down in alphabetic notation for the first time. Athenian society was witnessing the spread of alphabetic practice in reading and writing that deeply marked the cultural revolution characterizing what was to become the age of the Sophists. As skillfully illustrated by Eric A. Havelock, the practice of alphabetic writing in general, and specifically this transcription of Homer's poems, exercised a decisive influence on the history of Western culture. This is not to be understood as merely a technical device, since it determined a complete change in poetic habit and practice. First of all, what was fluid, ever changing, dependent on inspiration, subject to place and time contingencies, as well as on the highly innovative and creative transience of oral memory, was fixed in a stationary mould, which has been kept comparatively constant ever since. The whole continent of poetic oral practice gradually sank into the abyss of the past, a dimension that was no longer to be recovered. The ancient poet became an obsolete figure, overcome by the deep changes affecting political, social, and economic life and was eventually replaced by the figures of the poet and the writer, as we understand them today. Owing to their transcription, the two poems by Homer may be considered the first event and literary document of our history.

In their original living form they were not. They were rather a form of knowing through which the Greeks handed down from generation to generation the memory of their origins and identities, of their founding tales and legends, of their gods and heroes, along with a series of mainly cognitive and practical notions, rules directing their costume and their education (*paideia*), and last but not least the art of the word. A whole system of feelings and values, a comprehensive vision of the world had been committed to a poetic memory that did not play a secondary role in aesthetic terms (which was absolutely inconceivable at the time), but a primary formative role. The oral poet (as the

priest) was an educator and a prophet of his people, a wise man (*sophos*) in touch with the primordial divine and natural forces. To think that his poetic word and mnemonic and commemorative poetic practice is something having to do with the aesthetically beautiful is pure nonsense.

It is only starting from the written document that notions of author, text, genre, and style appear for the first time. The musically tuned recitative, reflecting the pathos shared by the participants, eventually comes to be replaced by private reading, by solitary subjective enjoyment of the written text, by a technically detached formal imitation and specialized literary practice. Poetry becomes a particular genre of the written word, like rhetoric, science, history, philosophy, and prose in general. The poet turns into a man of culture, a man of "letters," in the literal sense of the word. The notion of culture itself, which is typically Sophistic, is a further product of alphabetic writing, in addition to the notions of school and school learning. There are no men of culture prior to the revolution started in Greece by writing. The archaic age did not have any knowledge of the difference between the cultured and the uncultured, the literate and the illiterate. Such a distinction, based on the Latin word *litterae*, definitely asserted itself in Rome rather than in Greece. That is why, to speak of a "culture" of the archaic age is a blunder in our view and the result of a prejudice unable to transcend its own mental framework. The same could be said of what we call archaic "literature" and "poetry." These ways of thinking and speaking simply depend on the aesthetic transformation introduced by metaphysical thinking which, in turn, is the typical product of alphabetic practice.

With regard to this topic, I will concentrate on a few essential points. One can find a deeper and more detailed analysis in my recent work *Etica della scrittura* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1992). My inquiry focuses on the birth of rational thought or, more specifically, on the birth of logic. Oral practice as well as the formation and conveyance of what we call mythical thought already included some aspects that at present may be defined as "rational." Aristotle points out that in myth is already present the kind of astonishment that is at the very origin of philosophy, an implicit questioning of the nature of Being and the causes of beings as given in common experience. Yet, such an attitude became systematic in Greece only with pre-Socratic thinkers, who emphasized the rational aspects of the *logos*, paving the way for both Sophistic antilogy and Platonic dialectics. This deep change in the practice of speech and truth connected with the use of the word would be totally inconceivable without any reference to the practice of alphabetic writing. In this regard I will point out a few remarkable aspects.

First of all, writing isolates meaning from its original context of life, from the gesture of the living word experienced in concrete situations. In a purely oral practice speech is a habit that joins other active and expressive or meaningful habits. The word had to turn into a product, into something written, an object definitely separate from the lived and direct habits of verbal meaning, in order to draw our attention to what is, in the way that it is, and to the specific content of its meaning. It gradually acquired consistency and autonomy and started to be considered analytically, as it is today in our dictionaries. This operation tends inevitably towards the logical content of the word, towards its

pure signification, abstracted from its living context. Such an operation is both at the basis of the distinction between literal and figurative or metaphorical senses, and at the basis of the possibility of raising questions on the objective content conveyed by words. What I mean is that reading and writing incline towards a homogeneous definition of meanings. It is no more possible to neglect the difference between "good" when referred to a good citizen and "good" when referred to his peaceful or merciful nature. By playing on the technique of definition, that is, on the distinction of language expressions according to the meanings actually put into practice (same meaning and time, as logic says), philosophical dialectics defeated Sophistic rhetoric. Moreover, once the notion of "good" in its specific meanings has been isolated, we naturally come to ask questions about what is good in itself, what is the nature of "being good," and which common features are shared by the different ways of "being good" expressed and witnessed by language. This was the core of Socrates' questioning and inquiry, which inspired Plato to create what we properly call philosophy, that is, dialectics and logic. This was finally perfected by Aristotle in his *Organon*. As we shall see, logical homogeneity in meanings implied the idea of homogeneity or self-consistency in things.

Secondly, only the practice of writing made it possible to improve the techniques of arguing, refuting, and demonstrating, techniques subject to objective and intersubjective control. The overwhelming power of speech, the emphasis expressed by the human voice, the pathetic nature of images, all this produced effects of persuasion that would soon be defeated by the written text and by the cold and analytic detachment of the subject, who came to play the role of the reader. This possibility of keeping under control, comparing, reckoning, and concentrating on synthetic relations has always been viewed as the origin of scientific thought. History, geometry, cosmology, all these would never have been possible without the fundamental change introduced by the practice of writing into the mental habits of alphabetized subjects, not to mention the notion of "subject" itself.

Thirdly, alphabetic practice, by generating the autonomous nature of logical truth, that is, the exact and homogeneous sense of speech, produces the very idea of reality. Here, the habit of telling the truth is not opposed to that of lying, but it turns into the ability of reproducing the same thing in a correct form. Plato wrote about an *orthotēs* corresponding to *to pragma auto*. But Heraclitus had already appealed to a universal logos, a truth common to all mankind, namely to all men enlightened by reason and able to use their own minds, capable, as Parmenides added, of not contradicting themselves. Logic and ontology are therefore congruent and derive from the use of the rational mind, a usage that arose with writing, and could not have been possible among people who were still rooted in what Walter Ong describes as primary orality.[1] For them there was no universal truth, not even an objective reality, a physical world in itself, a universe made of facts totally detached from their own humanly or sacredly prominent "sense" and governed by the logic of pure meaning (or physical causality, as Aristotle conceived of it).

It eventually becomes natural, even necessary to a logical mentality, namely to a philosophical and scientific mind, to divide the different meanings

attributed to Being into distinct areas. Being is said in different ways, wrote Aristotle.[2] On the one hand we have the truth of the thing as it is in itself and its correspondent expression in speech, at which logical knowledge strictly aims. On the other hand we have the usefulness of things according to human purpose, their being good or bad, morally meaningful or not. Or their ability to stir emotions, feelings, pleasant or unpleasant images, and so on. Thus, ontological and scientific knowledge becomes divorced from both moral practices and artistic techniques, in compliance with that division of the truth, the good, and the beautiful we mentioned earlier. This implies the birth of an aesthetic dimension and the reduction of art to a self-governing, separate, and subordinate sphere of knowledge, a reduction to which we have become accustomed for more than two thousand years.

If we keep in mind all that has been said so far, we can easily understand how questions concerning "thought," "poetry," and "philosophy" are mere nonsense. What kind of objects are these? What do they mean? Just in asking these questions, we are falling into a long series of prejudices. We think of "thought" and "poetry" as something real, that has always existed, even though it is philosophy that first mentioned and defined them. We could put this another way. People have always been thinking and poetizing without really knowing it; philosophy just revealed this universal truth. But this is not the way things are. Rather, it is philosophy that appropriates Homer and assigns him to what it thinks poetry is. Homer, in his concrete linguistic and singing practice, could not even have thought of it, nor did he have any reason to. It is once again philosophy that daringly works out the abstract notion of thought with remarkable originality, changing the meaning of words and exercising an extraordinary reflective and argumentative power of definition. As a matter of fact, Parmenides is responsible for distorting the archaic meaning of the word *noein* (whose semantic root has never been fully explained by any philologists and which probably meant "to smell" or "to move in something liquid" or probably something else). In Parmenides *noein* takes the meaning of perceiving, of taking something true with the mind, knowing by intuition, and so on. Afterwards, Plato worked out Parmenides' lexicon, which even to him must have seemed obscure, and came up with the exact meaning of *dianoia* or, as it has been called since, "thinking" as distinguished from both "sensation" and "imagination." This complex creative operation is objectively taken as given by Aristotle and his noetic and dianoetic logic, which presumes to identify formal rules in human thought in general.

Homer, however, did not know anything about sensation, imagination, and thought, according to the meaning they have received since the philosophical revolution. This does not mean that Homer was incapable of intelligent habits, speech, or intelligent behaviour. The fact is that he lived within a range of practices that are different from and to a large extent incommensurable with our own practices of life and language. And above all he totally ignored the practices of logical definition resulting from the use of writing that allow one to determine the semantic thickness of words and to take them in a universal ontological sense. All this produced our current use of words that makes it possible to speak of "thought," "poetry," "man," "nature," and "language." It is

most significant that the Greeks did not have a corresponding expression for "language."

When we say "thought" or "poetry" we accept logic's defining practice, namely the metaphysical habit. Expressions like *die Sache des Denkens* or "thought's destiny," often used by Heidegger with the purpose of pointing out problems and thresholds "beyond metaphysics," still belong to the metaphysical way of thinking. Metaphysics is not characterized by an appeal to an objectifying thought, a thought that "entifies" Being by structurally missing its "truth" that it believes true, that is, worldly beings in their manifestation, while forgetting the event of their manifestation, its primary origin, irreducible to worldly beings because hidden source of the same. This way of approaching metaphysics does not go below its surface. In its deep nature metaphysics is the constitutive act by which an ultrasensible subject, namely the Socratic-Platonic mind, and a universalizing panoramic view, definitely disembodied, are established. Such a view is bound together with a logical mind that views things as a whole, as universally valid for everybody, and complying with a "public" intersubjective agreement of all minds. This attitude has been ideologically mistaken for the equivalent or the reflection of true Being in itself, of things, and the world. This is simply a consequence of the introduction of alphabetic writing, which deprives words of their contexts and reproduces them in merely conventional signs, the content of which turns out to be purely mental and abstract.

The subject who writes the word "virtue" alphabetically releases its meaning from concrete action, experience, or virtuous practice. Alphabetic signs allude to virtue in its most general sense, separate and aloof from all practice, and create the idea that such a "thing" indeed does exist somewhere or that it is somehow the model or essence (the *eidos*, as Plato used to call it) of every virtuous act and event. This ultrasensible objectivity, alluded to by the sensible written signs which conventionally bear pure meanings, belongs to a similarly shaped subject, the silent subject who reads and writes and that in doing so, and only by doing so, can properly think or "literally" thinks, which is synonymous with thinking the universal, the object in itself, virtue as it is universally in itself, in its conceptual truth valid for all – or more precisely, valid for those who can read and write and whose minds have gradually complied with these habits, which have since become so obvious as to be neither seen nor questioned.

Now we can easily see that what we call objectification is not a limitation of the "human mind," is not the cage inside which language fails in its attempt to tell both Being and its truth, in which case man could only keep silent or "deconstruct" the claims of metaphysical speech. That is not the point, at least because "Being" and "truth" are still integral parts of that cage and not something outside it which unfortunately remains inaccessible to human thought and language. This is the big misunderstanding, a *quid pro quo* resulting from the fact that the practice of writing has actually translated the word, putting it into practice directly and without reflection into its reflection, the written word. This is the first objectification which gives rise to all others. Writing turns the word into an object, a material thing opposed to its reader, who is

separate and free from it. What the reader cannot think is not something like "Being" or "truth" or "thought," which are not mysterious realities in themselves, supposedly inaccessible, but only "written things." What the reader cannot do is *write* his own act of writing, that provides him with universal objects like Being, thought, truth, poetry, philosophy, and so on. The act or habit of writing is something particular and has a specific context, like the habits of all other practices. But it has also a peculiar nature, that of universalizing and conceptualizing all that it produces, its object. The universal, the ultrasensible is its peculiarity, its speciality and, why not, its superstition. That is why it can write "the act of writing," but not the act itself. It can write the universality of writing, but not this particular writing. And even *this* particular writing that we are writing here and that we generally write (or, say, as logically thinking minds educated by writing) is immediately universal (every "this" is a "this," according to Hegel, and therefore says "this" in general). However, this immediate universalization is not produced by language or by the word, as Hegel believed, but by the written word, the word translated into something written and consequently conceived as "the word," something that was neither conceivable, nor visible nor existent in the practice of pure pre-alphabetic orality. We say "this" writing and miraculously understand each other beyond writing. We think of it *somehow*. But we cannot rationally "say it," that is conceptually express it without contradiction, or write it, after all.

Furthermore, if we can understand each other, it is only because, when we say "this" (this act of writing), we implicitly refer to a gesture, an ostensive act of showing. It is as if we could see a finger pointing to and limiting an area on this page and what is written in it as a result of a concrete and concretely denoted act of writing. And the difference lies between the performance of the act of speaking or writing and the object of this gesture taken separately from its own acting. The acts of speaking and writing will never be able to utter this difference, they will just allude to it. This allusion is the difference itself, performed in every practice as its limit and horizon; it is something acted and shown by every practice "starting from" its own limit and that for this same reason cannot be shown "within" its own limit.

These necessarily brief and all too general remarks on these "practices" allow us, at least, to draw some interesting conclusions that might be expressed as follows. The fact that philosophical practice, as rational thought in action allowed by alphabetic writing, cannot say itself in its typically universal conceptuality, simply denotes the ethical nature of its theoretical action. The true problem of philosophizing does not lie in its inability to say or to found the rational meaning of its thinking speech. The point is that we should take charge of the rational subject produced by philosophical practice. Instead of implicitly taking it as a given, philosophical practice should exhibit it in its constitutive limits and show it as a product of the particular nature of its universalizing alphabetic gesture. The "ethical" nature of this act lies in the fact that now philosophy, without dismissing the habit of writing, that is the habit of thinking conceptually (in absence of which there would be no philosophy, but maybe another practice), determines "to inhabit" its own acting otherwise,

that is, to dwell in the writing practice in a different way. Writing should not be employed to accomplish presumed theoretical truths conceived as universally valid; on the contrary, it should be seized as an opportunity and practiced as an exercise by which the subject is educated to watch himself not in his products (in his rational meanings, among which the word "subject" is highly significant), but in his event of meaning. The very meaning of the subject is to be subject "to" and not the subject "of" writing. His task is not to ground himself, but to turn to a new genealogical comprehension of himself starting from the enlightenment of the "practice" and from his own practice. This new comprehension represents the "ethical" nature of philosophizing as a result and consequence of the end of metaphysics, which is well on its way.

The second conclusion finally concerns poetry. We could say that, even if it has turned into literature, poetry has contested writing since the beginning. Hence its difference from philosophy. Plato used to fear poets and rightfully so. As shown by Havelock, he fought against the *paideia* of the oral tradition in order to assert the new humanity expressed by philosophical theory. He also fought against the literate poet and against the orator, whose allusively sensual word, stirring the soul's *patheis*, hindered the formation of the ultrasensible subject and his merely conceptual vision and obscured the philosophical sense of truth. Aristotle improved this movement of thought by definitely relegating art to the realm of the verisimilar, as a surrogate of that truth which falls within the province of science only. Rather than an adversary, the poet becomes an ally and a collaborator of the philosopher, when he repeats the same "human" truth asserted by philosophy on the imperfect level of sensibility.

How is the practice of writing disputed by poetic practice? First of all, by means of a constant relation to the archaic model of orality. The poetic practice pretends to repeat the original act of transcribing the Homeric tradition, previously mentioned. A poet is a refined literate writer, but his "pamphlets" pretend to translate the free singing of the living voice. Rhythm and rhyme are employed for this purpose.

Secondly, even though the poet makes use of conceptual words, (insofar as they are written) he also inserts them into a highly evocative and narrative context (as generally done by prose writers, novelists, and historians, whose work Aristotle did not assign to the sphere of the true, but to the sphere of the verisimilar; and that was not by chance). The comparison that can be drawn with the frequent reference to exemplification, which characterizes philosophical writing, clearly illustrates this point. A philosopher, for instance, in trying to define conceptually the passions of the human soul can very well describe the passionate love overcoming the adulterous couple well beyond their will and good intentions, by describing some common features and feelings. His description, however, aims solely to color and enliven his concepts, to provide him with a sense reference, well known to common experience. This description is in no way self-contained, has no value in and of itself, and for this reason is limited to a few schematic features, to a quick and general synthesis, that the reader will complete by recollecting events from his everyday experience. What is reported by the philosopher is just an *exemplum*, one sensible copy

of the concept, amongst many. The poet, on the contrary, is not interested in conceptual examples. His purpose is not to illustrate adulterous love. Even if it were, because of a consciously pursued moral project, the practice would follow in rather different ways. In the Paolo and Francesca episode, Dante is not interested in portraying passion or lust, but Paolo and Francesca themselves, *their* passion and *their* tragic destiny, totally individualized and unrepeatable. The poet reproduces concrete details, the fatal contingency of their emotions, perfectly contextualized in the individual and accidental nature of the event and not in the general rule disclosed in it. A poet examines the *exemplum* under a microscope, a philosopher through a telescope. And for a poet there is no such a thing as an *exemplum*, but only symbols, something whose meaning cannot be translated into a concept and has to maintain its connection with the sensible expression. In doing so, the poet refers to lived experience directly and not instrumentally. In concrete experience a lover does not recognize the embodiment of love, sexuality, or womanliness in his beloved, he cannot detach those universal characters from her features and body, because they are exactly what he loves. It is the woman that inspires his love and not a chapter of physiology or psychology that the woman might perfectly illustrate.

The poet walks the way from living experience to the word, recollecting the original emotional contexts. His act is a constant recollection of what words used to express when they were not yet conventional means of intersubjective communication. That is why his words often echo the magic of childhood and myth. The fact that his tale becomes emblematic and Paolo and Francesca become universal symbols of forbidden passions has nothing to do with the universal nature of conceptual knowledge. Rather, it has to do with the universal nature of "literary" conscience made possible, especially in modern times, by the spread of both writing and reading, encouraged and transformed by printing, in ways impossible to investigate here.

What has been said applies to poetry in general, but it is also true that contemporary poetry has renounced traditional rhyme and rhythm. Nowadays, poetry appears to be a conscious written exercise, a well-reckoned disposition of words on a page, relying on the free choice of lines, often interrupted by puzzling spaces, apparently bizarre, and on designs of unpronounceable shapes. It appeals to purely mental sounds and nonsemantic formulas, features existing only in writing and reading, which have no equivalent in words and voice. Contemporary poetry does not seem to allude to any singing, whether true or false. It is a highly "graphic" product, that is to be read rather than recited.

In my opinion, such a widely spread event should be acknowledged as poetic practice's deepest objection to writing. An objection exercised on writing itself by breaking its logico-chronological linear structure and its by-product, the metaphysical subject (a constituted temporal subject according to Plato, Augustine, Kant, Husserl, Bergson, and Heidegger), who is subject to fracture and refraction in the event of his emotions and language visions. The breaking up of the regular syntactic order is a further objection to the metaphysical subject and his "logical" writing.

Paul Celan writes:

> The reversedly-pronounced
> names, all
> the utmost,
> neighed to the king
> in front of mirrors of frost,
>
> besieged, surrounded
> by the plurigeminous births,
> the crenellated crevice across it,
> alluding to you
> isolated.

Or:

> Slowly clown-faced
> nothing-mirrored,
> the make-up truth blue-frozen
> in the angle-shaped mouth
> frost-pollen powder over the glossy overskull,
> around the thin questioning lock black,
>
> the eyebrows, eyebrows: growing
> two, giant antenna-combs, two
> —you so-combed
>
> so-perceived harsh night everever—,
> already tossed out of the flake-world,
> not here, not there.[3]

Here writing becomes a way of contesting and denying the metaphysical subject, the Western "historical" subject, who reflects his own disruption and surrenders to a different universe of experience, beyond the opposition between orality and writing and the "imperialistic" subordination of the former to the latter. A similar example, at a philosophical level, is to be found in a sentence written by Wittgenstein in the notebooks preceding his *Tractatus*, where he deals with his renowned theory of representation. He wonders whether *language* is *only* one language and why there cannot be a form of expression whereby one can talk *over* language, so that the latter could appear in coordination with something else. He supposes that music is that form of expression, but it is also peculiar to science that no musical themes may ever occur. He writes: "I am writing here only *propositions*. And why? *How* is language unique?" He wonders: "What is the ground of our surely well-grounded reliance on the conviction that we can express all meaning by our two-dimensional writing?" He admits that what was difficult about his theory of logical representation was finding a connection between the signs on the paper and a state of things outside in the world, and adds: "It is clear neither a pencil line, nor a steamboat are simple: is there a real logical equivalence between the two?"[4]

What emerges here is the knot binding logic to alphabetic writing, of which nonetheless Wittgenstein was only marginally and occasionally aware. Even C. S. Peirce showed the same ambiguous awareness in his existential graphs that object to writing inside writing and point out the finite margins of logical inference. This is how the ethical revolution of philosophy is announced, a revolution that I like to summarize in the expression *"foglio-mondo"* (world-sheet). I cannot dwell upon this subject now, but essential to it is its presentation, the genealogical display of the practice of writing that allows the metaphysical subject of writing to watch herself in the reflection of her peculiar writing effects and chase herself within the finite and particular boundaries of her acting – the same acting that produces the objective and universal truth of Western knowledge. The "world-sheet" is therefore an ethical exercise, the experience of an impossible transcription releasing the subject from her subordination to her logical superstition. Its purpose is not to commit her to nonlogical practices (which would be superstitious in their claim to a more satisfying truth), but to educate her to live where she is, in Heidegger's terminology, according to the time and destiny of the world of technique and its nihilistic consequences.

In this work on and in writing, which is at the same time against writing, or at least against its nihilistic consequences, I personally believe that poetry and philosophy are today side by side. Their practices remain distinct and that is good. The confusion between poetizing thought and thinking poetry, so common nowadays as a consequence of Heideggerianism, has misunderstood the core and the root of the problem. In its confusion it falls prey to that relativistic, weak, and pseudomystic nihilism it wishes to overcome. In the reconfirmed distinction between the practices of poetry and philosophy lies the possibility of a deep and parallel transformation of the subject of writing and of writing itself that fatally implies that our knowledge will be completely overturned, and the boundaries marked by metaphysics between science and art, aesthetics and philosophy, will be overthrown and eventually overcome. This does not go in the direction of any collusion between poetic fantasy and logical equations or any entry of cybernetics into artistic composition, as someone may be tempted to believe. Such childish and muddled avant-gardism has always proved empty. The true direction is the one that draws the *"foglio-mondo"* (world-sheet) by employing a new subject: a subject that will not be thoroughly and superstitiously subject "to" the practices pursued and the objects produced by them, but oriented towards the formation and conformation of his possible being subject, being the subject of the practices committed to the meaning and destiny of his own existence.

Translated from the Italian by Massimo Verdicchio

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2

THE RISE AND FALL OF REALITY

SOCRATES, VIRTUAL REALITY, AND THE BIRTH OF PHILOSOPHY FROM THE "SPIRIT OF WRITING"

Alessandro Carrera

I DIONYSUS IN THE NET

Now that chatting on the Internet is the talk of the day, it's easy to forget that just a few years ago the enthusiasts of virtual reality vociferously claimed that in their nonlinear and nonverbal environment one could finally get rid of the obsolete linear code of alphabetic writing. The viability of those claims doesn't need to be debated anymore; we know now that they were not justified. However, it is worthwhile asking why such claims were made in the first place, and why so many people who placed themselves in the forefront of technology were so eager to throw away the linear codes of communication altogether. We may come to the conclusion that the desire to distance oneself from the so-called limitations of the alphabetic language had little to do with technological hipness. A very archaic dream was at play; the same dream that thousands of years ago gave life to the shamanistic rituals which implied the total identification with the totemic gods.

As a mere substitute of reality, a mask of the truth that hides behind its signs, virtual reality is not different from any other semiotic code: a mixture of conventional and iconic (mimetic) signs, both being signifiers of reality, the reality being the signified. And yet virtual reality claims to be much more than *mimēsis* and representation. Virtual reality is a simulation of reality that demands to be experienced as a total replacement of reality itself. Whoever approaches virtual reality's environment as a totalizing experience is hanging on the balance of such duplicity. On the one hand, one knows perfectly well that what he or she is experiencing is not real. On the other hand, the temptation to call it *another* reality (if not a self-sufficient reality) is very strong. Virtual reality is not just an experience that creates a new fragment of reality: the degree of participation involved is so high that it displaces nonvirtual reality.

Virtual reality lies at the crossroads of four discourses. By the use of the term *discourse*, we refer here to the joining of forces of one semiotic code and the range of beliefs that such code is capable of sustaining. For reasons that will be explained later on, we might as well call this discourse *writing*. Iconic code is the first discourse at play; the codes of representation, as they operate in our culture, are the second; the third discourse is the creative power of the code of representation itself, that is, the cybernetic, self-correcting feature of the virtual reality environment; the fourth discourse speaks with the authority of scientific procedure. Virtual reality displays at its fullest the essential feature of modern technology, a feature that harks back to the Cartesian notion of *automaton*, ultimately aiming at replacing reality as it is perceived by the senses.[1]

A few years ago, the widespread and even morbid curiosity that surrounded the first experiments of virtual reality revealed a hidden urge far more ancient than the fads of contemporary technology. The archaic foundations of such a dream of total illusion and total participation cannot be overlooked. Shamanism or totemic religions have always provided, in a high degree, the illusion of living in a separate reality, shared by anyone who participates in the ritual and by no one else. The essence of ritual, as Nietzsche puts it in *The Birth of Tragedy*, is the dissolving of the individual conscience – the *principium individuationis* based on social and cultural differences linked together by the communality of *logos*. When the virtual reality enthusiasts claim that their environment goes beyond language or creates a new, nonverbal language, they actually resort to the most archaic forms of iconism.

In his *La sapienza greca*, while discussing what he called the "Dionysian celebration of knowledge," Giorgio Colli pointed out that when knowledge turns into delirium, delirium reveals itself as knowledge. When in their collective *parousia* the followers of Dionysus rushed to see the God, they did not see themselves as men or women anymore but as sacred goats, half-humans, half-animals. Similarly, when technology replaces Dionysus, the participant in the virtual reality rite considers himself as half-man and half-machine – as an android or a disembodied cyberspace traveler whose mind is no longer discernible from the computer's software. This virtual satyr is the modern or postmodern re-enactment of the shamanistic and mystic experiences whose common feature was the lowering of the *principium individuationis*. Since our life is shaped by technology as much as the life of the ancient Greeks was shaped by the gods, it is no wonder that the Dionysus in us makes use of technology to set himself free.

It would be misleading to say that in the Dionysian ritual the illusion replaces reality. What actually happens is that truth is encountered in ritual. Truth is to see God. Confronted with the splendor of that vision, ordinary reality turns into an illusion, a replica, a mask, a prop. Perhaps that explains why the virtual shamans despise nonwired reality. In cyberspace, they see the god of technology summoning them, just like Dionysus would summon his Bacchants. No wonder then that some cyberspace addicts, hardly at ease in the offline world of daily routine, are verging on sociopathic behavior. Online reality is more real to them because it shows the hidden technological net that holds ordinary reality together. For similar reasons, the revelation that ordinary

reality is nothing more than the dream of a god makes Dionysian mysteries absolutely real to the initiated.

Dionysus is the god of truth without mediation. His mysteries simulate the state when the infant is coextensive with the mother's body. Before the *principium individuationis* is established, before the alienating codes of language, culture, and society get in the way, in the absence of mediation promised by the mysteries (albeit artificially recreated by means of trance and drugs) all visions, sensations, and feelings appear to be authentic. However, with the passing of time, the primordial Dionysian ritual gave way to its aesthetic formalization, the Greek drama. The shaman became God's narrator, adding words to the original music, dance, and scream, while Dionysus, the god of the truth that does not have to be interpreted, came closer and closer to Apollo, the god of signs and forebodings that needs Sybils and seers as interpreters. When the choir was added to the scene, the ritual turned into representation. The choir was not made by real, possessed satyrs, but by men portraying satyrs. Immediateness had become mediated, and the direct vision of the god gave way to the speech that narrated the story of the god itself. Nonalphabetic, iconic, musical, immediately shared experience became subjected to *logos* and interpretation. More and more, the original oneness of the mysteries turned into the secularized imitation of itself. Actors came forward, faking the gods, while the choir restricted itself to the moralistic commentary on the actions carried out by individual characters. In the modern era, when the curtain fell to separate the scene from the audience, the reversal became complete. Now the audience is real, and the scene is an illusion. The nonlinear, nonalphabetic realm of the shared Dionysian experience has been stretched into a linear, written treatment. What used to be a discourse (a writing) of bodily gestures is now theater as a literary genre.

In the second half of the twentieth century, avant-garde theater has repeatedly attempted to re-create the flavor of the lost Dionysian experience (the Living Theater or Jerzy Grotowsky are the first names that come to mind). Following the ancient mystery path, the new Thespians wanted their theater to be more true than life, and their illusion more real than reality. Too bad they didn't have the goggles and the gloves.

II THE VIRTUAL GOLEM

When Galileo began transcribing the world into mathematical terms, he did not merely translate it; he re-created it. In Galileo's scientific revolution, mathematics is supposed to replace the impressions of the senses by revealing reality's inner structure. It was Galileo's epistemic revolution that made Descartes' mental experiment possible as the first modern attempt to discard ordinary reality in favor of its purely differential and discontinuous transcription (remember that differential and discontinuous read today as *digital*). The human being, Descartes argues, will never bypass the limitations of its senses. Neither can they improve the features of the hand and of the eyes, who are not sophisticated enough to penetrate the natural processes. And yet, since it is possible to create machinery that imitates nature, it is also possible to put aside

nature and deal directly with machines. The core of Descartes' mental experiment is the idea of an *automaton*, or robot, that reproduces perfectly the human body. The *automaton* does not need to be created. It is not a real Golem. It is a virtual object, a virtual Golem, a reference model that serves the purposes of a scientific investigation. Being a *mimēsis* of nature, the *automaton* will help us understand the ways of nature. Descartes' modelization of nature has been so effective that what was meant to be a mere speculative device quickly ended up as a "true" replica of nature. The language the scientist used to describe the feature of the *automaton* was then applied to nature. It did not take very long before the whole paradigm turned upside down, and nature was understood only by means of the vicarious language that had been shaped to describe the *automaton*. Hence, the great fascination of the eighteenth century with mechanical creatures, a fascination that lasted until the beginning of the nineteenth century (think of E. T. A. Hoffmann's and Mary Shelley's parables) to resurface as science fiction in the twentieth century. The new reality shaped by the cybernetic revolution has not severed its ties with the Cartesian paradigm. Contemporary scientific discourse is just bringing this paradigm to the point when the *automaton* will be truly ruling all over the world. The first step is to say that cybernetic is a good way to describe the mental process; soon it will be taken for granted that the mental process reproduces the language that has been adopted to verbalize it. The final step comes when everybody understands and agrees with sentences like "intelligence is feedback" or "the brain is like a computer, only more powerful."

Like a Dionysian ritual, Cartesian *automaton* is the transition from the delirium of knowledge to knowledge *as* delirium. With a huge difference. Whereas the shamanistic ritual (rites of virtual reality included) aims at deleting the linear, alphabetic features of the communication codes, in the Galilean-Cartesian discontinuous (digital) paradigm, truth is reached through systematic suppression of the nonlinear and nonnumeric (nondigital) traits of experience. As Galileo was wont to say, to approach science correctly we must "remove the animal" first.

What animal is Galileo talking about? Galileo does not say, but we may argue that he is referring, albeit unconsciously, to the archaic and animistic universe. Plato, after all, in his *Timaeus* had described the cosmos as a "great animal." Plato's animal is the "beast" that Giordano Bruno in his *Spaccio della bestia trionfante* saw as put down by the dry science of the Aristotelians of his time. Galileo had a long history of ridiculing the Aristotelians, and yet he sensed that the removal of the animal was essential to his reduction of the universe in mathematical terms. Through the shamanism of his science, much more powerful and effective than any other ritual, the mathematic hallucination took over the ordinary reality. By believing that truth is in numbers (in digits), Galileo started a planetary dream in which the scientists see the mathematical order of the universe as the ancient satyrs saw Dionysus (remember Leibniz's motto *calculemus!*). We are still dreaming Galileo's dream. It doesn't take any arcane ritual to convince us that we are little more than machines, and that our experience can be reduced to a numeric pattern of stimulus and response. Entering a hospital will suffice.

How much, and how little, has changed, from the beginning of our civilization! The archaic men saw God as the only reality worth its name. Dionysus was real, and the world was no more than an image in the mirror donated by the Titans. The cybernetic man sees the mathematization of reality as the only truth worth considering, while looking at the world through the mirror-screen of his computer, donated to him by the titanic forces of technology. And if the virtual prophets have not been able to get rid of the linear codes of communication, it is because their holistic, ideographic vision is reached through digitalization only. They have just fulfilled the Galilean project aimed at the rewriting of the world in mathematical terms.

And yet, the circle is not complete. Nonlinear, ideographic communication and linear, alphabetic, and digital writing are closer than ever. As A. J. Kallir argued in his genealogical research on the origins of the Western alphabets, the letters of the known alphabets are not mere conventions.[2] They are based on ancient and prelogical practices that went almost entirely lost when alphabetic writing became widespread. As Vico was the first to understand, the oral signifier did not precede writing. At least in the Western hemisphere, orality and literacy were born together. Before literacy there was no orality, there was an entirely different perception of the world, where there are no signifiers and no signifieds, but only magical-operational symbols. Kallir maintains that the original alphabetic letters were bispheric signs. They formed an operative unity of sound and image in which it is not possible to separate what is written and what is spoken. The Latin word for "house," says Kallir, was obtained by modifying the ideogram of a dome. By putting it straight we have the capital "D" and the first letter of *Domus*. And by accumulating many of these examples, Kallir claims that our alphabet is made by forgotten icons, or engrams, that still play a large role in the shaping of our subconscious imagery.

On a conscious level, we perceive the alphabet as conventional, and it would be impossible, and useless, to trace back any single word to its original iconic meaning. Alphabetic writing has indeed "removed the animal" from the world. It has detached language from its body (from the operative unit of gesture, vocal utterance, and iconic sign) and, in so doing, it has made possible the birth of logic and science. Long before the Cartesian *automaton* or the triumph of modern cybernetics, the alphabetic writing has artificially transcribed and digitalized the iconic and mimetic richness of ideographic language. Alphabetic writing has provided us with a vicarious reality with which we deal as if it were reality in itself. Actually, only by means of alphabetic writing can we speak of a reality in itself, detached from any contingency, as if it were possible to deal with anything "in itself" outside the given situation in which we partake of its event. This "literal" reality, which exists only in alphabetic practice, has replaced that world where Dionysus summoned his *mustēs* and where *Timaeus'* great animal was still breathing. The mathematical transcription of the world in which words are replaced by truly conventional symbols is just one step further. Virtual reality is no exception to the rule. But it helps us to ponder whether every simple act regarding writing and reading belongs to a certain degree of virtual reality. In the experience of children before they learn how to write, or in the world of someone who comes from a nonalphabetic

culture, there is a stage when letters of the alphabet possess a shamanic aura whose promise is the replacement of known reality.

Our will to power and the desire to subjugate the animal in us are still at the top of every technological agenda. And if we assume that the vision of God in the shamanistic ritual was an illusion, no less of an illusion (albeit powerful and effective) is our faith in the mathematical order of the universe and in its digital reduction. We are not accusing any linguistic or scientific practice of hiding the truth of nature, because the idea of nature is itself a human construct. What we call reality is indeed linked to a specific and contingent "opening of the world" that may take different names in time. To an extent, every formalization of reality makes reality virtual, no matter whether the formalization is accomplished by means of alphabetic writing, algebraic symbols, or computer bytes. And yet, we cannot help looking back in awe to the time when the world of experience changed once and for all, that relatively short span of time when theater replaced the Dionysian experience, alphabetic writing took over the resounding world of myths and symbolic speech, and, not many years later, Plato's dialogues mysteriously captured Socrates' oral teaching.

III   IS LOGIC FOR REAL?

At the heart of Derrida's theoretic enterprise lies the unearthing of the paradoxical nature of philosophic writing. Philosophy is a writing practice claiming to be the transcription of a voice that, by its essence, cannot be transcribed. However, thirty years after the publication of his early, daring works, we may say that Derrida did not want to draw the most radical conclusions from his own premises. By accepting the status of the voice *(phōnē)* as it is presented in Plato (where it is already implanted in the rhetoric of *logos*), Derrida did not want to turn his stern upstream, from the effects of Platonic writing back to the very practice of writing in its material and operational dimensions. Before Plato, when the empire of the *logos* had yet to be and *phōnē* was still close to the primordial utterance of the myths of creation, a more ancient and foundational terrain awaits us all. While this is a road that Derrida has not taken, Italian philosopher Carlo Sini, in his recent works, has turned his attention precisely to the practice of alphabetic writing. Attempting to go further than Derrida, Sini stresses that strong philosophical words like *logos*, Being, truth, and judgment *do not have any meaning* outside the writing practice that gave birth to them.[3]

Carlo Sini's *Etica della scrittura* (*Ethics of Writing*) is based on the assumption that every practice (*pratica*), from the most materialistic activity to the most intellectual enterprise, is better understood within the category of *writing*. It is not enough to say that by rendering what is close at hand and reproducible of the world with which it deals, every practice is a transcription of the world (every practice fashioning its own writing). More than this, every practice is writing. Philosophy as mainly a written practice began as a transcription of Socrates' voice. But *every* transcription of a world-event (Socrates being one of them) opens up new room for a new practice. And if any practice is a transcription of the world, any practice is writing.

Furthermore, if practice is writing, any genealogical inquiry regarding its lexicon, its unfolding of concepts and categories, its codes or its efficacy, will only end up mapping out the *writing effects* that its appearance has made possible. As tragedy was born from the spirit of music (from the non-linear Dionysian experience), so philosophy was born from the spirit of alphabetic writing, from Plato's desire to *write down* the unwritten appearance of Socrates.

No single thinker is accountable for the formalization of *logos* that occurred from Parmenides to Aristotle, when thinking changed from poetic and narrative *hodos* (way) to the extremely systematic Aristotelian *methodos* (method). Yet Plato provided the alphabetic practice with a theoretic frame capable of containing both philosophic and scientific writings. The formalization of the linguistic *logos*, as undertaken by Plato, takes three steps: 1. the letters of the alphabet share the same conceptualization of the *eidē* (Ideas); 2. the very notion of idealness, according to which the letters of the alphabet are purely ideal, discrete, and differential beings (like ideas are supposed to be), originates with the practice of alphabetic writing; 3. writing equals a conventional transcription (one could also say somatization) of idealness (*EDS*, 100).[4]

Sini argues that these principles, pillars of every philosophy of language, have been established by means of excluding any linguistic approach influenced by naturalistic hypotheses. In a naturalistic philosophy of language, the relationship between things and words is not just conventional. As A. J. Kallir and others tried to demonstrate, conventional signs are nourished by deep symbolic and analogical ties.[5]

Plato's *Cratylus*, for instance, starts with a frankly naturalistic approach to language, based on mimetic and, as of yet, not so fanciful etymologies. Nonetheless, Plato soon abandons his mimetic approach, replacing it with the pure theory of *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, where language ceases to imitate the practices from which it was born in order to turn into a true, logical, and scientific relationship (no longer analogic) between words and things. Plato's change of perspective on language, Sini claims, was the pivotal point of Western thought, the very moment when Being and truth were invested for the first time with a pure and detached power of significance that otherwise they might not have acquired. For similar reasons, when Heidegger defends the truth of Being, against the tyranny of logic, he still remains, according to Sini, within the borders of the Platonic circle.[6] The question of truth is not decided, as Heidegger would wish, in the conflict between the truth of logic (where the Platonic *logos* is already at work) and the truth of Being (i.e. the "concealedness" of Being's essence, the *lēthē of Sein*). Plato's *alētheia* (the purity of truth as "unconcealedness") does not rise, as Heidegger claims, against the background of *lēthē*. It becomes visible by getting rid of *mimēsis* and of any analogical impurity tainting the origin of writing (*EDS*, 17–18).[7]

Heidegger, Sini admits, is right when he says that whenever a problem is spotted (like "the problem of logic"), it is because there is a *question* that nobody knows how to ask anymore. Yet the question regarding the content of the logical form, the question that logic can't answer anymore because it is too busy tracking down its "problems," cannot be answered, as Heidegger did, by merely correcting the meaning of *alētheia*, because such a solution does not free

itself from the Platonic horizon. Only an inquiry on the writing practice that Plato developed to build up *alētheia*'s fortress (the only place where the problems of logic make sense) would take us further. Heidegger's criticism of Plato falls short of demonstrating that only linear and alphabetic writing makes up the *schēma*, or the hidden *schematism* of logic (*EDS*, 23).[8]

There was no such a thing as the idea of truth or the idea of Being before linear and alphabetic writing took place. Nonalphabetic cultures do not think according to ideas. They think, as E. A. Havelock has pointed out, in practical units. They do not possess a logical scaffolding from which they check out abstract concepts. Nonalphabetic man knows what "the good thing" is; he doesn't know what "the Good" is. On the other hand, Sini admits, Havelock's account of writing is achieved through an historian-like apprehension, as if Plato's treatment of language were the result of a fully conscious move toward abstraction. Plato's experience was probably very different altogether, still bordering on the enchanted edge of the new practice that has just been disclosed. Only after Plato's time the new alphabetic universe is ready to be charted and diversified according to the various genres of prose writing: philosophy, grammar, science, or history. Henceforth the question on the content of the logical form (of discourse in general) in Aristotle turns into an issue of *orthotēs*, or formal adjustment.[9]

The question of the content of logical form is locked into a prison whose key has been lost. Heidegger does not hold it, for the reasons that we have just explained. Neither does Havelock, regardless of the merits of his discoveries, nor does semiotics. Havelock's history of writing, as well as semiotics, are universalistic theories, still claiming that their Western and anthropological point of view is the balcony from which truth can speak. They see man on one side and writing, on the other side, as if it were possible to encounter man and writing in themselves instead as localized and contingent events and practices. Being, Truth, Man (Western Man) of whom we speak and decree birth and death, are permitted to exist only insofar as the practice of alphabetic writing, of which we are subjects, allows it. When semiotics claims to be a science (here Sini echoes Derrida's criticism of semiotics), it separates the *signifying* (what is actually written) and the *signified* (the ideal and immaterial meaning of what has been written) in a way that repeats the metaphysical distinction between the body and the psyche, the sensible and the intelligible. This criticism does not apply only to semiotics. Even the so-called hard sciences are intrinsically ontological and theological insofar as they assume a notion of the signified that is true in itself and to which all signifiers refer. This "true signified" is not very different from the Cartesian God, watching over the correctness of logical propositions.[10]

Yet not even Derrida's grammatology is safe from the Western and Platonic *strategy of the psyche*, as Sini calls the anthropological and theological schematism, which is based on the assumption that truth is exiled from the world and that there will always be an unbridgeable gap between appearance and reality, between phenomenon and Being. Derrida's arch-writing that he introduces as an attempt at nonmetaphysical thinking, based on the *trace* of writing, and not on *logos* or idea, does not escape such strategy. Arch-writing can be defined only by affirming that the trace is not an object and that it cannot be brought to

presence. In resembling the typical conclusion of every negative theology, where the signified (God) remains irreducible to every signifier struggling to reach it, Derrida's definition of trace reproduces the same metaphysical move he was trying to avoid. Vico's *Scienza nuova*, argues Sini, would have served Derrida better than Rousseau's *Essai sur l'origine des langues*. Behind linguistic signifiers there is neither arch-writing nor arch-trace, but as Vico saw only: "An unmeasurable prehistory of practices; a wide, genealogical, phenomenological, and phenomenographical adventure" (*EDS*, 88).[11] Yet not even the Vician genealogical approach comes close to the question on the content of the logical form (the content of formalization of discourse, of *logos*). To say that the content (the meaning) of logic is the alphabet, or that logic is the signifier and alphabetic writing is the signified, does not solve the problem. The question of the content of logical form is not a question of the content of what comes into existence in the form itself: language, writing, or difference. Language, writing, or difference are already signifieds, objects of a reflection already framed by metaphysics, captured in the very binary logic that opposes form and meaning. The real question is about the content of logical form *as it appears in writing.*

How does writing give shape to what we later define as logical and meaningful? If we need genealogical research, it is the genealogy of the logical mind through language, symbol, and sign, as it was unveiled by Vico and carried on by Friedrich Creuzer.[12] But such a genealogical inquiry cannot redress any origin or any original truth. Origin and truth are simply nowhere to be found, not because they are lost in some irretrievable past, but because they are *nothing*, they are just the edge and the *null* of the inquiry itself. They are edge of the trace, Derrida might say; or the line where the trace ceases to be a trace and becomes the *null* of itself. Nothing changes if we substitute trace with practice, since any practice, just like the trace, is limited by its own borders, its own specific nothing.

Sini calls *ethics of writing* the acknowledgment of the finiteness of every practice as a finite and limited enactment of the sign. In his terms, *ethics* must be understood as *ethos, meaning habit* (as Peirce would say) as well as *dwelling: ethos* of writing as the practice of inhabiting the space of writing. It is all *ethics of transcription* too, since every enactment of a sign-relation is, in its own way, a writing, a de-sign of the world, a transcription of the world. Architecture is writing, physics is writing, angling, to quote the classic *Sophist*'s example, is writing, another way of clipping out a detail of the world. The ethics of writing neither describes any of these writings nor does it attempt to deconstruct them. It posits the question of what is the meaning (the content) of their event, where is their threshold and what is their ground.

Nonetheless, between genealogical inquiry and its ethical resolution, between the origin of writing and the ethics of writing, an intricate no-man's land lies before our eyes. As we have already pointed out, the genealogy of logical forms is not fully entitled to answer the question regarding the content of *logos*. Whoever relies heavily on the results of genealogical inquiries maintains a strong faith (maybe too strong), in a naïvely assumed phenomenological tenet, as if the sheer decision of going back to the thing itself (that is, writing and its beginnings) would give us its essence, its meaning, its true *sense.*

Genealogical researches are easily trapped in a vicious circle. Regardless of how refined their procedures are, their point of view is always panoramic, ideal, historical, which is exactly the point of view that alphabetic writing made possible. Genealogy takes for granted that the object which it investigates is, after all, "objectifiable." Its target can't be missed. In other words, isn't the genealogical investigation of the content of logical form just another off-spring of the well-known, archetypally metaphysical, will to truth? Only will to truth can posit the problem of writing as the transcendental horizon of *logos*. On the other hand, *logos*, transcendence, and truth become true objects of thought only within the frame provided by alphabetic writing. It is the well-known conundrum of the social sciences. Only the will to truth which is internal to the anthropological project brings the anthropologist to question his own position as a researcher. For similar reasons, the ideal Interpretant of the origin of truth rises only within a will to truth so radical that it comes to question its own foundations.[13]

We cannot dismiss any genealogical project, though, without standing up to its claims (like Vico and Creuzer boldly did). That would be just the prelude to a much bigger defeat, sentencing philosophy to silence, *aporia*, and undecidability. He who has not the strength to challenge science on its battlefield deserves its contempt. There are questions worth asking of science: How did writing change from graphics to linear strings? How did the evocative, poetic voice surrender to alphabetic verse? How did the epic, symbolic word, that fashioned its own temporality through rhythm, evolve into the linear temporality intrinsic to the written text? As a result of this string-like alignment, writing became invisible. We don't "look" at writing anymore, we "read" it to know what it "says" (what its *voice* says). We follow a string of points of which we can't say anything except that they have no sense in themselves (they are conventional) and whose role is purely differential. The same negative theology is shared by other metaphysical beliefs: time, Being, and motion, all of them both thinkable, or unthinkable, within the frame of linear writing.[14]

Still, genealogy can't really disclose what is essential to the way alphabetic writing created the world that we still inhabit. We do not know how writing disentangled itself from the sea of the other unrealized, latent chances that old Parmenides, in the eponymous dialogue (137a), called the "sea of discourse" (*pelagos logōn*). Genealogical inquiries are concerned with what does exist, not with unrealized chances. What we need is an hypergenealogical project where those chances are taken seriously as the null of every enterprise, the border and the nothing which pertain to the unfolding of any event.

After Plato we cannot think as one could have thought before Plato. Anything we might think of doing wouldn't be thinking at all, it would be something else. And yet Plato is an answer to Socrates, to that "truly demonic and extraordinary man" (*Symposium*, 219c) who quietly unraveled the civilization in which he was born, at the same time allowing for the foundation of another one. To ask what is the content of logical form, what is the sense of philosophic writing, and its difference from the primordial world of the gods, means to wonder, once again, what is Socrates' message. How can a Socrates appear?

What is the meaning of his coming into the world? Why was it so necessary to track down his words?

IV THE TRUE DANCER

Regardless of the many authoritative answers the question has received, we humbly have to ask it again. It is as much a fundamental question as the one on the essence or the concealment of Being. The primary problem of philosophy is: "Who is Socrates?" Very much like Plato, Socrates is an answer too. He answers to Delphi's oracle, which singled him out as the wisest of all men. Why Socrates? No one knows. Socrates didn't know either. On the other hand (and this is our point): *"Why not Socrates? Why not just someone? Why not just anyone?"* If Socrates doesn't know why the oracle called upon him, that means that Socrates is just like anybody else. Socrates is the first *Everyman* of the great profane tragedy of Western culture. In questioning Delphi's oracle, he isn't just "kicking against the pricks" like Moses did with the burning bush when he complained of being unworthy of the divine call. Socrates' "why me?" is much more reasonable and therefore more awesome. With Socrates' questioning his call, the individual is born, *the man in the street*, the man who is like every other, undistinguishable from his neighbor in the gods' gaze, and who can be indifferently summoned or not summoned. There had to be an unpredictable latency in the appearance of Socrates, some concealedness of its own, a difference which was also an indifference (that is, absolute freedom of his call) concealed in his coming about. The event of Socrates had been provoked by the oracle, but no oracle would have foreseen how Socrates responded. What makes Socrates so devastating is that his persona does not rise from the predictable result of any process, not even by the standards of the most shrewd hermeneutics or historiography. His coming about showed a degree of phenomenical freedom that bears almost no equivalent in the history of mankind. In other similar occurrences, like Jesus or Buddha, the same epiphanic liberty gave birth to religion, not to philosophy. Socrates' inexplicable indifference cannot be justified by any genealogy. Reconstructing the world that preceded him is hopeless. On the other hand, when Socrates' epiphanic indifference clashes with philosophical writing as it was passed down to us, it draws the real border (the edge of the trace) of any genealogical inquiry on the meaning of writing itself. Philosophy is the name of the writing that Socrates, albeit uninterested in writing, helped give birth to by surreptitiously forcing Plato to write about him. And we can't help but pause on the threshold of that event, since only on that very fine line can we hear the echo of Socrates' indifference (to the gods and to writing) as well as have a glimpse of the universe that he left behind.

Without Plato there is no thinking. But without Socrates there is no Plato. Was Plato ever free to think apart from the sheer power of Socrates' presence? Could we still call it thinking? This is a genealogical question we don't know how to answer. We don't even know how to justify our obsessive desire for unveiling the Platonic strategy, a desire that is still related to the Neoclassic and Romantic turning point in European culture, when it was decreed that the modern Europeans were the true descendants of Greek civilization. The legacy

is still haunting. Regardless of Hegel's gigantic enterprise (his dialectic being the most straightforward attempt at rationalizing Trinity's dogma), in the common sense of the last philosophers, and with few exceptions, Christianity is little more than an accident that happened on the way to (or from) Plato, while the contribution of Judaism to the roots of Western culture is still a matter of controversy.
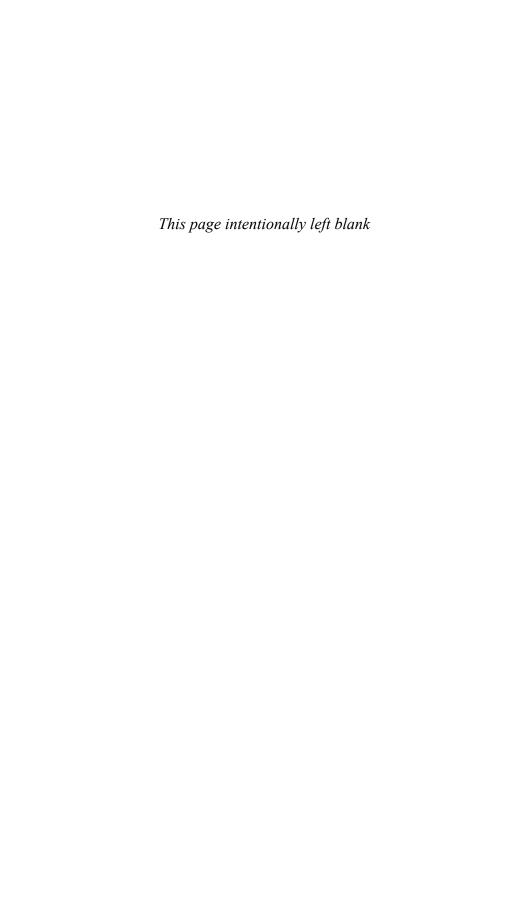
It has been remarked that Sini's *Etica della scrittura* seems to assume that our era is nothing but the unfolding of the basic alienation of thought for which Platonic metaphysics should be blamed. The remark deserves serious attention. It addresses various positions that, mired in antimetaphysicial zealotry, seem eager to get rid of the very tradition that gives them the linguistic tools they couldn't do without. But that's not Sini's case. On his part, he has answered that he does not believe that there are such things as *metaphysics* or *thought* outside the alphabetic practice that actually created metaphysics, thought, and their reality. His "ethics of writing" does not concern any alienation or distortion suffered by thinking because there is not such a thing as a true practice being alienated by less true practices. Whoever thinks so still assigns values on a metaphysical basis (that is, if values are not absolute they are not values at all). As in C. S. Peirce's pragmatic principle (where the object coincides with the range of its effects), in Sini, every object of thought (every "thing") is understood as the unfolding of a practice. Borrowing a line from a faithful Neoplatonist like W. B. Yeats, we might say that the "thing" is where you can't tell the dancer from the dance.

Nonetheless, there is a true *fin de siècle* obsession concerning the prenatal condition of philosophy, from which Parmenides, Heraclitus, Democritus shine their light like mysterious ghosts of whom we, who were born in Plato's light, know nothing of what we would like to know. We would like to experience some sort of regression to that prenatal condition in order to know what would have become of us if Socrates had been contented to follow Parmenides' footprints, or if Plato wouldn't have burned his youthful attempts at tragedy when he converted himself to dialectic. Thus, we inflict the most sophisticated hermeneutic tortures on our bundle of surviving Greek texts, hoping that sooner or later, under the pressure of our Inquisition machines, they will disclose their secret. We know all too well that without Socrates, the midwife, and without Plato, the doctor on duty, "we" wouldn't be here, because we would think differently and wouldn't ask ourselves the same questions. Yet the abyss of the private language which was spoken there, while remaining always obscure, will never cease to beckon us.[15] An alien wisdom is calling from that abyss, a nonlinear, nonalphabetic, nonphilosophic knowledge that we try to recall every time we immerse ourselves in the Dionysian world of musical harmony, or when we dream shamanistic dreams ranging from the Living Theater to virtual reality. On that knowledge, which is not nihilistic but simply tragic, philosophy has nothing to say. So, what is the realm of philosophy? What question does philosophy claim as its own?

It is the question about questioning. Other figures of wisdom don't ask; they already know it all. Two questions, actually: first, why is there philosophy at all; second, why do we keep on asking such a question. As it is easy to see, in putting

together these two questions, we are still stuck with the penchant roles of the genealogical approach (why philosophy?) and the theoretical one (why ask why philosophy?). It is not a pointless activity, even though it appears addressed at nothing else but itself. Other figures of wisdom may know their truth, and yet they prevent themselves from asking questions on the nature of asking. Their practice (their writing), which is kerygmatic and not dialogical, does not contemplate asking its own nature. Even the dialectical method that Parmenides explained to the young Socrates (*Parmenides* 136 a–c) did not originate from a free inquiry upon truth, but from the assumption that the existence of the One was the *fundamentum* preceding any questioning. And yet, even Parmenides' rigoristic approach was limited, flanked as it was by the edge of its trace, its own specific *nothing*. *Question* is the name of that nothing. Archaic wisdom leaves no room for questioning within its borders. In so doing, it outlines the external space where the interrogating habit exercises its domain. When Socrates answered Delphi's oracle by questioning it, and by consulting other men in order to decide, in the inner roots of his *psuchē*, whether the oracle was or was not correct, he claimed rule over that land that lay outside the unpatrolled crack in the walls of traditional wisdom. From Plato on, the writing arm of philosophy followed him. Perhaps, when Sini calls ethics of writing the habit of dwelling on the threshold which lies between archaic knowledge and Socratic knowledge (the knowledge to know nothing at all), he harks back to Heraclitus' mysterious fragment 119 B: *ēthos anthrōpōidaimōn*. As *ēthos* (habit, *praxis*, character, the act of dwelling) is demon and guidance to man (what is divine in man, who dwells near the divine), so ethics of writing, is the threshold, the practice of self-containment, the *praxis* and the demon of an interrogating habit that must constantly come to terms with its own endless self-interrogation.[16]

Translated from the Italian by Massimo Verdicchio

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3

ANALOGICAL THINKING AS A FRIEND OF INTERPRETIVE TRUTH

REFLECTIONS BASED ON CARLO SINI'S *IMAGES OF TRUTH*

Forrest Williams

> Whoever possesses truths which in one way or another, know-
> ingly or not, are not interpretations, i.e., signs and relations of
> signs which infinitely refer, let him come forward to cast the
> first stone. What the role of truth is in interpretation . . . is an
> issue as inescapable as it is disquieting. . . . the philosopher is
> first of all the friend of truth.
>
> Carlo Sini, *Images of Truth: From Sign to Symbol*

Carlo Sini's *Images of Truth*[1] is a penetrating study and attempted resolution of the apparent dilemma of squaring the interpretive character of all philosophic discourse with the philosophic obligation to truth. Even if coherence certainly is a necessary condition of truth where interpretation is at work, is it a sufficient one? What assurance can there be that the outcome, however internally coherent, is in any credible sense a true one? With this dilemma in mind, we find Sini developing an original philosophic discourse, inspired by both Peirce's semiotic philosophy and Heidegger's hermeneutic-phenomenological philosophy, that insists on being both interpretive and, as he phrases it, "the friend of truth." More exactly: regarding these two philosophies as "theoretically congruent and complementary," Sini locates his own thinking at what he and others deem to be a philosophical "convergence" of Peirce's "infinite semiosis" and Heidegger's "interpretation without end" (*IT*, xxviii; *IV*, 8). These "complementary" approaches – a philosophy of signs and a hermeneutic philosophy – both appear, unfortunately, to have radically nihilistic and relativistic implications. "How," Sini rightly asks, "can anyone [including, of course, Peirce, Heidegger, and Sini himself] speak of truth, authentically, if its

form and image are constantly deferred in a movement which, from the point of view of truth, is literally without either head or tail?"

This concern, which in Anglo-American epistemological parlance would generally be called radical skcepticism, has haunted modern philosophies at least since Nietzsche and pragmatism, and perhaps even since Hegel. And Sini insists that one cannot blithely turn a blind (that is to say, dogmatic) eye upon this highly troubling implication; much less can one overtly concur with it, since clearly one cannot pronounce the nihilistic or skeptical implication itself to be "true." Therefore, he locates his thought at this seeming dead end of philosophical discourse as interpretive through and through, precisely in order, instead, to confront it with *the experience of truth*" (*IT*, xxix; *IV*, 10, Sini's emphasis). In sum, his work is, in a broad sense of the term, phenomenological.

I shall not attempt here, of course, to represent this complex work – one which arouses in me, to borrow a phrase of his, "consonances and elective affinities" (*IT*, xxvii; *IV*, 8). Rather, what I should like to investigate in this limited space is another issue, concerning the very language for expressing the basic concepts of philosophical inquiry. Though not Sini's issue in his book, it seems to me germane to his (and others') concern with reconciling interpretation and truth.

What sort of thinking – or otherwise put, if you will, what sort of language – is needed for his philosophic project? The correct answer, I shall propose, is that the fundamental concepts of any philosophical discourse – and *ipso facto* those of Sini – must be analogical. I shall try to identify what I believe to be his analogies.

Let me broach this matter by turning briefly to a recent American philosopher, the late Stephen Pepper, who developed a somewhat similar view of philosophical discourse by reference to metaphor rather than analogy.

In his once widely read book, *World Hypotheses*, Pepper had already expressed views similar to those of Sini with specific regard to the untenability of "radical nihilism and relativism."[2] There is, he wrote, "the utter skeptic . . . whose only safety (from self-contradiction) lies in silence," and there is "the dogmatist, . . . a more serious character than the utter skeptic . . . [who] will put you down by main force . . . and he is no myth" (*WH*, 7, 11).[3]

Pepper then proceeded to address the question of how an all-encompassing philosophical system can generate its most fundamental cognitive concepts. The issue is inherently puzzling, because such knowledge can be neither merely logical in character, nor simply empirical, nor some random mix of these. Pepper's position, as some readers will recall, was that certain concepts are removed from already established contexts of cognitive use and then employed *metaphorically*. He termed such borrowed concepts, philosophical "root metaphors," and claimed to have located four such root metaphors that have proved themselves in the tradition adequate to the cognitive task of philosophy, naming them "Form," "Mechanism," "Context," and "Organism" (*WH*, Chaps. 5–11 passim). Although I am in general agreement with Pepper's view, I have three specific difficulties with it. The first is that he attempted to bring all major philosophies under one or another of four such metaphors, a claim that I find too reductive, considering the variety of major philosophic works. The

second difficulty is that he did not emphasise sufficiently that any such "root metaphor," because no word exists in isolation, brings with it what Wittegenstein would have termed a whole family of cognate terms and concepts. I shall turn to the third matter in a moment.

First, rather than supposing only four such sources, it seems to me that we should anticipate a far wider range of possibilities. For example, logic, mathematics, one or another of the natural sciences, various "human studies," such as history, social theories, those heterogeneous disciplines that bear the catch-all title "psychology," and even everyday "common sense," appear to have been deployed systematically in various philosophies.

Second, I suggest that a philosophical work is always, conceptually speaking, indebted to some other, fairly coherent domain of knowledge and language for its fundamental concepts. At the same time, it seems that philosophical discourse dare not naïvely embrace such borrowed concepts literally, on pain of simply dissolving its own inquiry into a branch of logic, mathematics, one or another school of psychology, or whatever.

The third difficulty I find with Pepper's views is that metaphors are too imaginatively explosive, as it were, and therefore too difficult to put to controlled theoretical use. Hence my proposal to look, instead, for what I shall call "root analogies," a far more orderly and reliably communicable use of language.

Philosophers of rhetoric and literary critics seem fairly well agreed that analogies and metaphors lie in close proximity along a continuum of figurative language and thought. Indeed, metaphors have often been called implicit analogies, and analogies, discursively elaborated metaphors.[4] However, just because the metaphor is the far more compressed, imaginatively rich, and associatively powerful trope, it may be all the more valuable to the poet but all the more risky for the philosopher. By comparison, an analogy (as the etymology of "logos" already suggests) is a more discursive, more logically regulated, and more intellectually driven figure of speech. It requires that we thoughtfully consider similarities and differences between states of affairs, and sieve these according to their relevance to the analogical intent. Sensuously and imaginatively thinner than metaphor, and intellectually more provocative, analogies can be more "friendly," in Sini's sense, to the ultimate philosophic concern with truth.

Some philosophers would, of course, object to assigning a fundamental role in philosophy to any figure of speech whatsoever (although, if I am right, they themselves must be doing so, if only unwittingly). We need only recall the general rule in the Age of Reason, with its strict condemnation of any use of figurative language in philosophy; motivated by their understandable hostility to prevailing theological obscurantism, tropes were viewed as mere ornaments, forbidden to anyone seriously interested in truth. But by the nineteenth century, no less a thinker than Mill had already deemed analogizing a process sufficiently rational to be counted as a mode of logical inference (*analogia*, as the Greek has it). Its value, he rightly noted, "depends on the nature of the resemblances on which they are based and on that of differences which they disregard." (*EB*, 1910, vol. 1, 912–13). In our own times, the modern literary critic, Cleanth Brooks, drew the implied consequence straightforwardly: analogy, he stated, is "a means of presenting a truth incommunicable by other

means" (*EB*, 1992). In sum, I suggest, "analogical thinking" can indeed be a "friend of truth," provided that differences and resemblances are thoughtfully regarded. This thesis of "analogical borrowing," I must emphasize, is by no means intended as a psychological claim about any philosopher, including Sini. The philosophical "borrower" certainly need not agree with either Pepper's overall view or mine on this matter. Possible analogies are simply there for the taking, in the given language and culture.

I have already remarked on two preconditions: the pre-existing or "proto-typical" discourse must itself be a cognitive one, some domain of knowledge, so that the prototype concepts would already be fairly clear and understood, how-ever implicitly, within their native setting; and, such analogical transfers, it should be clear by now from the very meaning of the term "analogue," will never amount to a wholesale incorporation of the prototype concept. For a familiar example, we might cite Kant's fundamental ("transcendental") prin-ciple of "a priori synthetic judgment." The analogical transfer commanding the first two Critiques is plainly indebted to the cognitive domain of coherent judicial discourse, as Kant's term "*Urteil*" or "judgment" suggests. In a court-room trial, as we well know, someone cognitively competent to do so brings together the available evidence, and then judges "a priori," which is to say, according to *pre-existing* laws. By contrast, in the third Critique, shifting to the fundamental notion of "reflective" (rather than "determinant") judgment, the operative analogy is rather more to an appellate court finding, where pre-existing legal determinations applied by lower courts are themselves surveyed and as a result (in some cases) yield an essentially creative judgment with no exact legal precedent. The eventual value of a given analogical use cannot, of course, be demonstrated in advance: the proof will always be in the pudding.

It must be admitted, of course, that beyond the common comprehension to which I am appealing, this vast topic of analogical thinking still remains one of the least examined today.[5] I shall assume that for present purposes enough has been said about it to allow me to turn to my previously anticipated question: within Sini's text, just which pre-existing domain of cognitive discourse pro-vides him with the analogical concepts employed for interpreting our "experi-ence of truth"? The answer to this question will, of course, illustrate the thesis just advanced concerning the role of analogy in philosophy.

Let me begin by presenting (sketchily, of necessity) an example of one of Sini's important inquiries in *Images of Truth*. I title it, for reasons that will be apparent shortly, "the child-moon episode." I shall then – to anticipate – try to show that the philosophical concepts skillfully invoked by Sini demand to be read as analogues of concepts familiar to us in a specific cognitive domain: that of literary criticism.[6]

Finally, in support of this thesis, I shall offer a concrete (though highly condensed) instance of the domain of "literary criticism" by criticizing briefly two well-known poems.

THE "CHILD-MOON EPISODE"

The main philosophical concepts – the "root concepts" – that emerge in Sini's meta-interpretation of the "experience of truth" by way of his example of the "child-moon episode" are: "whole" and "part," "perfect" and "imperfect," "near" and "far," and "affective tonality" or "mood" (*IT*, 100–7; *IV*, 134–43). Of necessity, I limit myself in this section to culling those few elements of Sini's analyses that are most telling with regard to these concepts.

In the modern philosophical tradition, Sini points out, we have come to think of ourselves as "private psyches" confronting a "public world." But this so-called "private psyche," though real enough in its own way, is actually itself a formation of a "public world," which is itself already constituted by sign-relational experiences, in Peirce's sense (*IT*, 93; *IV*, 124). The latter experiences, however, are themselves neither "private" nor "public." Unfortunately, familiar epistemological dichotomies – "private/public," "inner/outer" – have falsified from the start the structures of our concrete, lived *experiencing* or *esperire*. (The Italian infinitive employed by Sini, as Massimo Verdicchio helpfully advises us in his translation, is more dynamic or processual in its connotations than our common English locution, "experience" [*IT*, 158, n. 67].) Such typical opposi-tions then move to exclude as "no friend of truth," one might say, because merely "private," "a dimension of experience that is not really 'private,' since the private does not yet exist" (*IT*, 93–4; *IV*, 124). Unfortunately, the effect is to distort that dimension of experience by measuring it in terms already regulated by constituted public language and public concepts (*IT*, 94; *IV*, xxx). (No doubt Descartes would serve as a typical example, with his notion of "secondary qualities," that is, "secondary" to those primary qualities of objects that can be measured according to publicly established standards.)

We deflect these misleading distortions and *partis pris*, Sini maintains, when we recognize that experiencing (*esperire*) is an interpretational sign-relation of the complex structural sort schematized by Peirce as the triad, "Interpretant–Representamen–Object" (*IT*, 102; *IV*, 135–6). Clearly, "Interpretant" is not to be taken here in the conventional sense of a private psyche, Subject, or "inner substance," much less as an inner object, since any of these would simply land us back in the dichotomies already rejected. An "Interpretant" is, rather, a "responding-to . . . ," Sini notes (*IT*, 115–16; *IV*, 152–4).

We must turn in reflection, then, to *esperire*, and be careful to suspend the dualistic conceptual habit of prematurely "publicizing" some dimensions of experience and thereby prematurely "privatizing" others.

In the "child-moon episode," borrowed by Sini from Piaget, a child is being carried, and is looking at the moon, relative to which, of course, he is changing position (as we would say in public discourse). Interestingly enough, the child spontaneously reports both that he is moving the moon and that, just as he is looking at the moon, so the moon is also looking back at him (*IT*, 101; *IV*, 134). One is of course inclined to smile indulgently at such childish delusions. The child's utterances, when judged by common-sense discourse, scientific discourse, or much of modern philosophy, are simply false; so, we take them to refer to nothing more than a merely private, "psychological" experience, as opposed to being "publicly" verifiable statements. In sum, we immediately

introduce an epistemological schism between, on the one hand, a true (that is, "objective") account and, on the other hand, a false (that is, "subjective") account which holds no interest for the philosopher as "friend of truth." Now, there is no doubt that these are indeed the naïve utterances of a child. But for Sini's philosophical purposes, so much the better: since the philosophical issue at stake is not at all one for either common sense concepts or for those of psychology or physics. The *prior* philosophical issue, rather, is just how a public world and its "private" dimension are constituted to begin with, so that our everyday (and sometimes scientifically sophisticated) modes of cognition may eventually come to find their own suitable ranges of application.

Sini goes on to contend that, however strange it may seem to already consti-tuted common sense, long habituated to thinking in terms of a constituted "external world," the "looking relation" here *is* somehow reciprocal. "The child *feels* at the same time [that he is looking at the moon] that he is being 'looked at' (and perhaps protected) by the moon" (*IT*, 102; *IV*, 136; my emphases). Of course, one is inclined to counter immediately, almost by conditioned philo-sophical reflex, with the familiar strategy of modern epistemologies – one which has had a decisive influence on most of our modern philosophies. Poun-cing upon the telltale verb "feels," one moves to declare summarily that the (mere) "feeling of reciprocity" is, like *all* feelings, of no cognitive significance. Sini therefore attempts to "activate a counter-vision" that will improve our com-prehension of how "the child" and "the moon" have already become for us distinct entities occupying a "public world" (Cf., *IT*, 98; *IV*, 130). As Sini puts it:

> To call this [feeling of reciprocal looking] a child's "psychological fantasy" is once again to assume "child" as already constituted "reality" and, naturally, "moon" too as an object in itself. This means being unable to understand the *primordial* and *constitutive* character of the [sign-] relation "moon-child . . ." Even the adult looks at the moon feeling somehow that he is being "looked at" and perceives this look sometimes as benevolent and sometimes as malevolent; among his most common expressions there is, for example, "to be moonstruck," and so on. Why? Nobody knows. Common sense says that these are just fantasies, oddities. The psychoanalyst says that these are just sub-conscious "projections."   (*IT*, 102; *IV*, 136)

One may well be reminded here of Merleau-Ponty's citation of Paul Klee, to the effect that "in a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me."[7] Interestingly enough, then, it is not only the naïve child, but likewise the mature artist, who may so describe certain experiences.

So here is a Peircean sign-relational event, Sini contends, that is *neither* "private" *nor* "public," *neither* "inner" *nor* "outer." And, speaking in a comple-mentary Heideggerean fashion, he writes that the "moon-child experience" is "an event in the constitution of the *being-in-the-world-of-man*" (*IT*, 101; *IV*, 135; my emphasis). The primordial structure of experience is not that of a duality, but of a bipolar process. What the child naïvely and spontaneously expressed, was the reciprocity of primordial experience; which is not at all equivalent to,

but constitutive of, our derivative and (so to speak) commonsensical conception of "me-here/world-there."

This structural reciprocity of experience, moreover, challenges some of our other "commonsensical" conceptions as well, according to Sini. Consider our notions of "the near" and "the far." Did not the child experience the moon as far away, as "over there"? (*IT*, 103ff.; *IV*, 137ff.). Yes – and no. Certainly, there is in this experience an "over-thereness," a "far-ness," about the moon. Yet, that very "over-there-ness" is simultaneously experienced as "here," that is, as a "far-ness" which for all that does not so separate the moon from the child that the moon is not experienced at the same time as "near." This is why the child "can move" the moon as the child is carried along. Naturally, this "world-constitutive" dimension cannot possibly refer to the measurable distance within the consti-tuted public world, approximately 186,000 miles, that Neil Armstrong trav-elled in a space rocket. It would be absurd to propose to "measure" this "nearness-farness" by publicly applicable standards. Nor is it to be pre-emptively classified as a "merely private" phenomenon. This dimension of "distance-in-proximity" might be best designated, I suggest, by a gerund, grammatically speaking: for example, as "a spanning."

I am reminded here of the words by which the notion of "far" is expressed, I have been told, in Zulu parlance, an African language that happened to develop, as we know, in circumstances relatively free of the Western influence of the particular linguistic stratagems of scientific and industrial societies. Fully translated into our language, the Zulu phrase apparently says nothing less than: "There-where-my-mother-can't-hear-me-any-more-when-I-am-crying." In the phrase "when-I-am-crying," we hear expressed the experiential feature of near-ness; in the phrase, "can't-hear-me," the feature of farness; and in the word "mother," the reciprocity of "farness-in-nearness-and-nearness-in-farness."

This cross-linguistic comparison, with its references to maternal care and tears, may serve here to introduce yet another salient feature of Sini's analysis of *esperire*.

The child-moon phenomenon is pervaded throughout, and subtended, by an *affective* character that it would be somewhat misleading to dub "an emotion," as that term is commonly understood in everyday language and by many psy-chologists. This affect is a global feature of the child-moon episode, not a component or epiphenomenal effect. What would therefore be better termed "an affective tonality" is essential to the very possibility of the experience of interpretive objects, because it first supplies a "world" within which they are able to appear. Whereas, to speak here of "an emotion" (even the term, "fea-ture," is misleading) would almost inevitably be to call to mind this or that particular, isolable, "private" event caused by other events taking place within an already given public "world." Sini contends, correctly I think, that this affective tonality would be conceived quite incorrectly as only a particular psychological reaction to an already given object (though of course there is that going on, too, psychologically provoked by the child's sensory perceptions, movements, etc.).

Rather, categorically distinguishable from this or that particular emotional reaction, can be discerned some sort of affectivity for which it is admittedly difficult to find a customary name among either everyday or purportedly more

scientific languages of psychology; for these have been institutionally fashioned for quite other purposes than the reflective analysis of experience.

The requisite philosophical concept, according to Sini, is a pervasive and globalizing affective tonality which Heidegger had already called attention to by way of his concept of "mood" (*Stimmung*) (*IT*, 100; *IV*, 134). In Sini's view, Heidegger thus introduced "an extraordinarily valuable topic which he never fully pursues" (*IT*, 99; *IV*, 131). Pursuing it himself, Sini holds that "mood" in Heidegger's sense is vital to the very possibility of the Peircean sign-relation, for example, the "child-moon experience." It functions to open up a world-like structure of experience in the first place (*IT*, 99–100; *IV*, 132–4). In this particular instance, there is not, then, a "mere" feeling in the sense already noted, but "an affective mood" of reciprocity that opens a world within which can be disclosed such things as "child," "moon-against-sky," "trees-in-park," and whatever other meaningful entities may be contingently "here" or "there" in a "world."

And yet, Sini reminds us, it is only too easy for both philosophers and psychologists to overlook or even dismiss its crucial *epistemic* role because of the reference to affectivity:

> as soon as we say "emotion" or "emotional," these words commonly stand . . . for something referring or relative to a "private" or "internal" event . . . [But] "private facts" are a formation and a consequence of the public eye . . . , divisions which are neither original nor unproblematic. Therefore, let us take a point of view different from the obvious one provided by common sense and its public truths.   (*IT*, 98; *IV*, 131)

"Mood", then, has no less central an epistemic function than that of founding and constructing what can be rendered as the objective world of knowledge (*IT*, 98; *IV*, 131). Hence, Sini warns, we may not reduce – as the philosophical tradition has inclined to do – the dimension of "*Stimmung*" or "mood," to nothing more than

> a feeling or a state of mind that is added "psychologically," within the man's head, to "real" bodies and to "real" public objects. Let us think of it as that relation that literally "opens up the world.". . . Nothing *real* could be encountered without "mood." . . . It is in "mood," with "mood," for "mood," that what we have here called "constitutive relations" or "originary relations" are continuously occurring.
>   (*IT*, 99–100; *IV*, 131–4)

Still cleaving to Sini's analysis of the child-moon episode, let me conclude my highly schematic version of Sini's account with his discussion of the categories of "part" and "whole."

In the metaphysical tradition, true thought has been supposed to be capable at some point of conceiving a positive whole. True cognition, *Nous* or *Dianoia*, thus achieves an overview, a "bird's-eye" view, a "pan-oramic" apprehension of reality in all its "perfection." Into this supposed positive whole, "parts" may be fitted, each such part being "what is not itself the whole"; what is therefore

known to be "*im*perfect," as over against the "perfection" of the positive whole in its "thoroughly done, per-fected (*facere*), and non-temporal finished-ness." Certainly, this metaphysical notion of a "perfect, positive whole," within which everything else can be subordinated, and is merely temporal and partial, hence *im*perfect, has been rejected by both Peircean semiosis and Heideggerean hermeneutics.

At first sight, as has often been objected, what *seems* to remain, therefore, to these (and some other) modern philosophies, is simply one part after another, with no beginning or end, and no admissible concept of wholeness whatsoever. Thus, "truth" must amount for Peirce to "the long run." But how "long" a "run," before one can say, "Yes, this is indeed so"? Unfortunately, there appears to be only infinite semiosis, or alternatively, interpretation after interpretation. Thus, it is only in a Pickwickian sense that one can speak of truth, it would seem. An ironic outcome for any philosophical, that is, cognitive endeavour. Hence, the common charge of radical nihilism or skepticism noted earlier.

The traditional "Parmenidean" aspiration to apprehend a "perfect whole" need not and should not be jettisoned, however. While it now becomes impossible to speak intelligibly, on the basis of Sini's analysis of the child-moon phenomenon, of a positive or perfect whole, there is, according to Sini, something that nevertheless allows and even demands the "root concepts" (in my terms) of "whole" and "part." Again, no positive whole in the traditional metaphysical sense, is ever discoverable. But the alternative is not: "no whole at all." Rather, the experience does require the concept of a "negative whole." It is important, however, to see that this is not the nonsensical notion of a whole which is somehow just nothing at all (*IT*, 105ff.; *IV*, 139ff.).

There are two possible senses of "nothing" or "negation" here. They happen to be, in the contingency of common speech, more conveniently distinguishable in Italian than in English. To make the conceptual distinction, Sini avails himself of two very different Italian words, "*niente*" and "*nulla*" (*IT*, 106; *IV*, 141). Since no phenomenon can conceivably provide panoramic grasp of anything as a positive whole (e.g., the "whole moon," much less of "the whole of reality"), one can say, not just adventitiously but in principle: "there is *no such* (positive) *whole*." But this does not mean that the whole-to-part and part-to-whole structure therefore translates (*per impossibile*) into a "nothing-at-all-whole-(to)-a-part-of-nothing-at-all" structure (or vice versa). That would indeed be the absurd implication, if the whole were "*niente*," that is, just "nothing at all." However, the whole at issue here is not "*niente*," is *not* just "nothing at all." Rather, wholeness figures in the phenomenon as "*il nulla*," "the null," *of* the evident part-iality of *that* (particular) moon or child. This "null whole," which then is by no means some vacuous "nothing at all," in fact determines the very identity of the part, making of the part a perfect-ed part, that is, in the root sense of a finished, de-finite, determinate part. In this sense, "null whole-ness" is a constitutive and organizing ingredient in every primordial, triadic sign-relation, and is an indispensable concept (*IT*, 105; *IV*, 141) Otherwise put, in the experience in question, the signified moon must be understood as a (null) whole that is "present" in that perfectly determinate part, but present precisely *as* "absent."

Every sign-relation, then, Sini proposes, is not only sign of this or that part-icular object (for example, the moon), but is "in the last instance, *segno di nulla* [*sign of nothing*]" understood as the sign of a "*null* whole" that, without being a positive totality, yet enables the given part to be just the determinate part that it is (*IT*, 106; *IV*, 141). An important consequence, Sini holds, is that we must also revise the traditional metaphysical concepts of "perfection" and "imperfec-tion" associated, respectively, with whole and part. By virtue of being evidently *partial*, the child-moon experience is not in consequence somehow *im*perfect; relative to, say, some ("alas!") still unrealized "perfect whole" (*IT*, 107; *IV*, 142). Rather, the experience is "perfect" *while* (indeed, *because*), by the same token, it is "partial." In sum, on Sini's semiotic-hermeneutic analysis of *esperire*, "perfec-tion," quite contrary to the metaphysical tradition, does not call for a single, positive, and actual whole, however denominated, but only wholes which are always and everywhere part-ial by virtue of their negative wholeness.[8]

Needless to say, this conceptualization of experience not only flies in the face of the metaphysical tradition rejected by Sini's hermeneutic-Peircean phil-osophy, but departs equally from publicly-constituted common sense, daily corroborated by common speech; and also, does not coincide with any objective concepts of the sciences; and, does not fall gratefully on some philosophically attuned ears. Hence, Sini insists, "to really understand its meaning . . . , we must first *destroy* . . . the public *logos* in whose light we have been educated, been brought up, and have learned to speak and think" (*IT*, 98; *IV*, 130).

And here, I would say, arises the question concerning the source of such fundamental concepts which is at the heart of this discussion: if the concepts employed in the 'child-moon' analysis are – as they must be – metainterpretational concepts, where "in the world" (for there can be no other origin) can we garner them in the first place?

I have previously claimed that such specifically philosophical concepts must turn on an analogical use of concepts borrowed from some other, going sphere of knowledge. In this instance, where might those prototypes be located? My reply, as I have indicated, will be that literary criticism, the capacity to think and talk about works of art (most conveniently here, poems), could best provide us – wittingly or not – with the suitable analogues for the "root-concepts" employed by Sini in Peircean-Heideggerean metainterpretation of the experi-ence of truth. In support of this suggestion, I now turn to concrete, critical analysis of two short pieces of writing in verse form that are frequently selected for anthologies of poetry.[9]

TWO POEMS

The first, Dylan Thomas's "Do not go gentle into that good night," is an exemplary poetic achievement. The second, William Ernest Henley's "Invic-tus," is a mediocre effort; properly speaking, it is a would-be poem that is little more than a pseudo-example of poetry. In the spuriousness of the latter piece, however, lies precisely its theoretical usefulness, as I will try to show. I have also chosen these particular examples, partly because both are short, but more important, because they share a certain superficial similarity in content. Both

display prominently the familiar and generic emotional themes of defiance and anger. This particular resemblance will facilitate comparison. (I should confess – or better, warn! – at once that what I shall have to say about the Dylan Thomas poem, will not only, in the nature of the case, be egregiously meager compared to the extraordinary richness of the poem itself, but will be an instance of rankly amateur literary criticism undertaken solely to make a philosophical point.)

1.   *Dylan Thomas's "Do not go gentle into that good night"*

> Do not go gentle into that good night,
> Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
>
> Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
> Because their words had forked no lightning they
> Do not go gentle into that good night.
>
> Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
> Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
>
> Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
> And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
> Do not go gentle into that good night.
>
> Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
> Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
>
> And you, my father, there on the sad height,
> Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
> Do not go gentle into that good night.
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Some few comments relevant to my claim:

In line 1 of Dylan Thomas's poem, the grammatically anticipated adverb, *gently*, which the commonsensical reader ("we," "one") almost surely expects, is displaced, as it were, by the adjective, *gentle*; a word that, by way of its accented first syllable and its wholly unexpected softening in the second syllable (*gentle* as contrasted to the expected *gently*) stands forth in the sound of the first line, by the same token introducing a momentary pause in its rhythm. Embedded in the admonition, even imperative, of this first line, the softness of sound and meaning of *gentle* partially transforms the opening command into a quiet enjoining, an asking. But this is soon followed by an assertive, almost indignant, almost angry exclamation in line 2. Then line 3 names, and expresses by its rhythm as well (*Rage, rage against* . . .), like an enraged cry now almost out of control, an anger that now seems to have been already lurking in line 2. But by the end of line 3 this anger is immediately gathered up and muted into the sadness of the *dying of the light* – caring, grieving words for someone near death.

One cannot but notice, surely, how crude and strained is this description that perforce relies on our standard vocabulary for our most conventional ideas of human emotions; and how I have spoken of successive lines, where in fact there is a cumulative interplay and a continual retotalizing. For example, line 1 recurs later, word for word (see line 6), as any computer could easily confirm in its robotic way. But what the reader (in contrast to any computer) will understand is that the first two stanzas are now being subtly tied together, in a unity that nevertheless embodies a distinction: line 6, though indeed repeating line 1 word for word, has subtly shifted from the imperative to the indicative mood (again, don't ask the computer), thanks to the new subject-term, "they," appearing at the end of line 5. Since *they* prove to be *wise men*, realizing the failure of their words, *who do not go gentle into that good night*, and (now looking ahead) are soon to be succeeded in the poem by *good men, wild men, and grave men* as well, the scope of the poem expands, and its "addressees" increase in variety: all these – the wise, the good, the wild, and the grave – are commanded/ enjoined/begged to *rage, rage against the dying of the light*. But these are soon to converge again, as the speaker then addresses you, *my father, there on the sad height*; evoking, of course, the personal image of a dying father, yet at the same time the pervasive religious image of Golgotha. The invocation, *curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears*, recalls at once the wrath and mercy of the Old Testament father-God as well as that of the dying parent. Then, suddenly: *I pray*. We feel the full stop, as if the poem were ending, as the two words infuse now a reverent tone into the speaker's voice, at the outset so dominating and assertive, now so small and humbled before that towering Father/father. Then, the last two lines surprisingly "repeat" the first and third lines of the first stanza, or rather "echo" them in a different emotional register that yet complements and completes the preceding lines. For of course although the tokens are identical, they now register quietly, pleadingly, almost unbearably sadly, rather than angrily; because the penultimate as well as the last of these two lines comes to a complete stop at a period, the forward movement of the poem that had been increasing in vigour now comes to an end with shocking rapidity. The last line closes the poem with a feeling of ineluctable finality that gives to the poetic *whole* a clear limit, that de-fines it, in the root sense of "de-fines," circumscribes, completes, "per-fects," thus making of the poetic experience a determinate part that is at the same time a "null whole." And so the poem closes about itself, precisely by both re-invoking and yet revoking its opening command.

I am embarrassed to have presented here so simplistic and clumsy a gloss on but a fraction of what goes on linguistically, imaginally, rhythmically, sonorously, culturally, and *always emotionally*, in this remarkable poem. Owing to the multiple meanings alone of so many of the words, one could of course gloss more or less endlessly, with a variety of emphases and perspectives on this poetic "object" that would further multiply the possible observations. Yet no such extravaganza of commentary would really add up to the *distinctive wholeness* of this *particularized* experience of the poem. For it is not a wholeness that can ever be *positively identified* apart from or over and above the lines before us. Rather, precisely because its wholeness, unlike that of (say) the Pythagorean

theorem, cannot possibly be comprehended as a positive totality over and above its elements, the poem as a positive entity perpetually eludes us, and seems to be present only in its absence. The poem, consequently, is at one and the same time an entirely de-finite *part*, and a non-positive or "null" *whole*. It is, therefore, not "*im*-perfect," but "perfect-*ed*." It is "complete and entire," yet in a way that does not for a moment exclude, as does Spinoza's "Substance," the happy possibility of any number of equally perfect-ed poems (of whose existence, in fact, we well know).

But I have been speaking of Dylan Thomas's poem as if it were simply a text "out there," when clearly the poem is as much in our responses as in the "object." Indeed, the conventionally imagined separateness of "subject" and "object" no longer obtains, properly speaking, and we find instead an experience, where self and object, reader and poem, are its reciprocal moments, or polarities. It is, to recall the child-moon episode, near in its farness and far in its nearness.

Moreover, although I have noted that the poem expresses in word, sound, and imagery a combining or transforming of various familiar emotions and attitudes, e.g., of command, injunction, defiance, declaration, pleading, encouragement, sadness, anger, and prayerfulness, I have of course failed – and must have failed – to convey its unique affective tonality, its globalizing mood, that does not merely refer to and associate stock human emotions such as anger or fear, but is a pervasive affective structure that constitutes or opens up a world within which everything appears different from our everyday world. In the constitution of this world, our institutionalized repertory of emotional reactions has served as at best a source of raw materials. The world-opening "*Stimmung*" of this particular poem is integrative, and its revealed world, is entirely unique; if *per impossibile* its elements could be named, their names could only be that null and perfect-ed whole which is the poem itself.

2.   *William Ernest Henley's "Invictus"*

> Out of the night that covers me,
> Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
> I thank whatever gods may be
> For my unconquerable soul.
>
> In the fell clutch of circumstance
> I have not winced nor cried aloud.
> Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody, but unbowed.
> Beyond this place of wrath and tears
> Looms but the horror of the shade,
> And yet the menace of the years
> Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.
>
> It matters not how strait the gate,
> How charged with punishments the scroll,
> I am the master of my fate:
> I am the captain of my soul.

Here, the critical task is no longer utterly daunting, but singularly unrewarding, due to the mediocrity of the piece. It is easy enough to note, to begin with, that Henley's meter is monotonous, that his choice of words is hackneyed (*this place of wrath and tears, the horror of the shade*, etc.), that he used a rhyme scheme so implacably that it seems to control the words, rather than work with them; and so on. The verse form of broken lines is an arbitrary imposition, justified only by the rhyming. All that is offered could just as readily be offered – and would be more gratefully said – as a simple series of four unbroken sentences (albeit annoyingly pretentious ones). As a consequence, the sort of wholeness possessed by these words can be located only extrapoetically, when they are taken simply as someone's prosaic declaration of intent, like an act of promising to repay a loan or to abstain from smoking – a "performative utterance" in Austin's sense. And precisely because Henley presents us (confusingly, in a textual format that by the conventions of literature suspends practical account-ability) with a performative or series of them, the emotional contents, which it does little more than talk about, can easily be identified and catalogued by such generic and abstract terms as "defiance," "anger," etc. Thus, all sixteen lines (or better, all four sentences) could simply be replaced, without loss as a signifying event, by any commonplace declaration of resolve appropriately uttered under trying circumstances; for example, "Whatever happens, I just won't give up!" Such a vow does represent, of course, a very important sort of linguistic state-ment, since such utterances are established and understood through a set of accepted social customs and contexts for present and future action. And, in a sense, I want to suggest, so simple, prosaic, and conventional a paraphrase as I have made would be far preferable to "Invictus"; would indeed be far *less* "imperfect," if you will, precisely because it would raise for the ideally respon-sive reader none of the linguistic confusions and frustrated expectations gener-ated by Henley's deliberate and egregious choice of a rhyming verse format. As it stands, then, by assuming this presumptively poetic format, "Invictus" seems gratuitous. Indeed, it is hard not to wonder, with some irritation, about the rationale for such a lengthy and ponderous linguistic apparatus introduced to say something so commonplace; in sum, to think about the author, his motiv-ations, his apparent self-delusion, and who knows what other matters in the public world. What, one may legitimately be tempted to ask in exasperation, can have been either the private or public occasion calling for this particular sequence of words or sentences? But of course any appropriately motivating context has been excluded in principle by the verse form and the actual context of an anthology of poetry. It is somewhat as if, walking down the street with Henley, one were to hear him suddenly declare, "The sun is shining," or "I'm not going to give my house to that stranger over there," with no further explanation forthcoming for these gratuitous utterances. As Wittgenstein might observe, one might well take such a speaker to be in a bizarre state of mind, if not deranged.
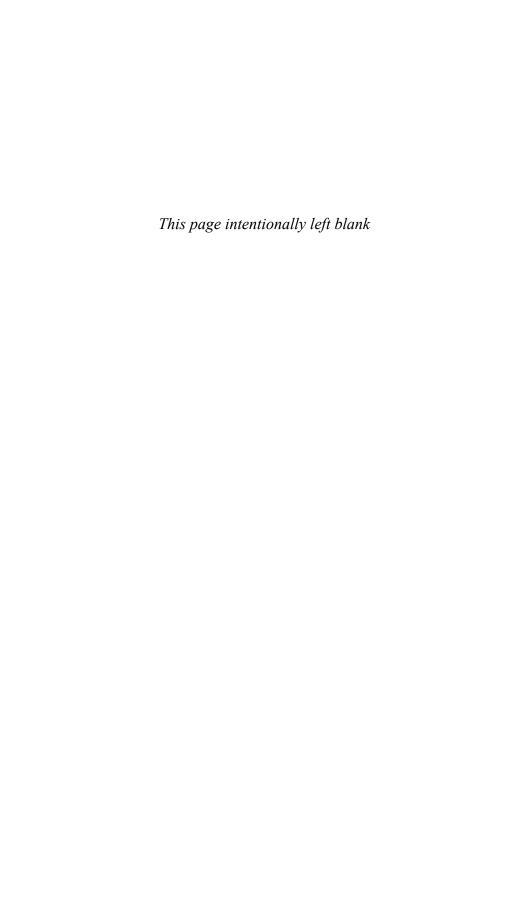
To put it mildly then, this aggregate of components, does not have the completed, de-fined character that would make it, like "Do not go gentle into that good night," "perfect." Given our rightful expectations of something clearly not asking to be read as a statement of public or private fact, but as

something of poetic value, it turns out to be de-pressive rather than expres-
sive.[10] Perhaps one could even say that in a sense every bad (that is, failed) effort
at what presents itself as poetry, or speaking more generally, as a work of art, is
a singularly depressing *image* of that very spectre of intellectual nihilism, of that
"niente," that has long been perceived to threaten Peirce's "infinite semiosis,"
Heidegger's hermeneutics, and any metainterpretive philosophy. By contrast,
the real affinity is not between W. E. Henley's "Invictus" and Dylan Thomas's
poem, despite certain generic emotional themes these may be seen to share in a
highly abstract sense, and in spite of the interesting fact that both are fre-
quently anthologized; the greater affinity lies between the child-moon episode
and Dylan Thomas's poem; for, admittedly different as they are, both answer to
the same conceptual analysis.

If we ask, then, whence we derive our capacity as "ordinary-language," "pub-
licly constituted," and "privatized" adults, to understand the philosophical
concepts employed by Sini to (meta)-interpret the primordial *esperire* of the
child-moon episode, the answer may lie – for myself, does lie – in concepts
employed analogically, concepts whose prototypes may most readily be found
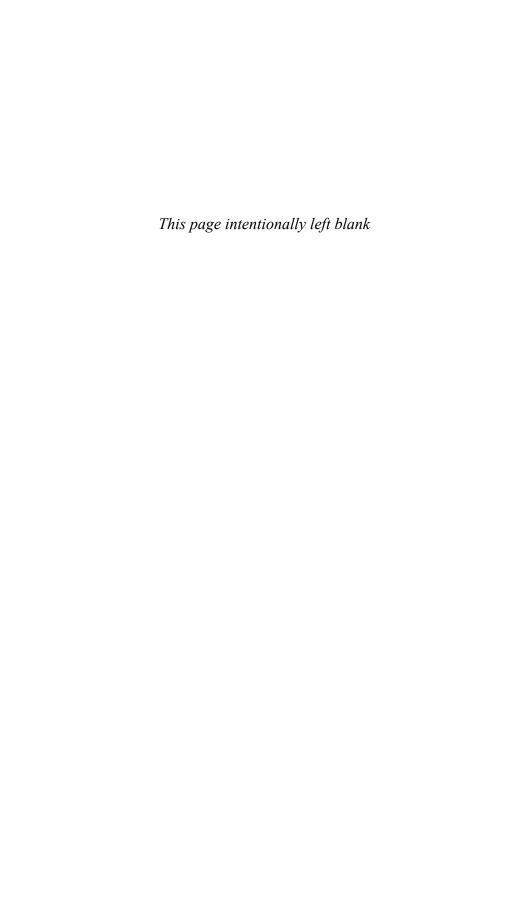in the cognitive enterprise of literary criticism.[11]

This has been a speculative extrapolation of my own, of course, from a brief
but I think highly representative portion – the "child-moon episode" – of a
complex philosophical theory of knowledge and experience as through and
through interpretive; and, of course, is itself necessarily an interpretation – one
that could well be quite off the mark.

But perhaps, I should like to think, it may in fact embody for Carlo Sini
some "consonances and elective affinities." Possibly it even offers, in effect, a
kind of philosophical rationale for this comment made by the author himself in
Images of Truth: "There are moments in experience in which nothing (*nulla*) in
its most pregnant definiteness, is attained. . . . Maybe the play of Art aims,
deep down, at this essential place of experience" (*IT*, 107; *IV*, 143).

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TRUTH, TEXTS, AND THE NARRATIVE SELF

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INTRODUCTION

Robert Burch

The last "seminar" of Heidegger's teaching career dealt with Hegel's *Science of Logic*. That Heidegger chose this particular text for the occasion was doubtless more than a whim. It is in the *Logic* that Hegel argues "in the element of pure thought alone"[1] for the concept of identity as the negation of negation. And it is this concept that both epitomizes and fulfills (*vollendet*) the metaphysical tradition inaugurated by Parmenides and Plato.

Hegel's argument is familiar and in its formal terms can be quickly summarized. A pure, abstract, undifferentiated identity is unthinkable. In order to be able to grasp identity as such (as expressed in the principle "A–A"), the terms of the tautology must first be determined in thought as *differentiated* to be able then to be equated in a relation of identity. This differentiation is negation, since "in the element of pure thought alone," negation is the *minimum rationale* for the thought of "difference." Accordingly, in principle of identity itself, the term "A" is thinkable as such only in terms of the thought of "not-A" as its sheer negation. In the thought of this principle, then, there is an essential mediation. That is to say, in the positing of "A," "not-A" as the determining negation that differentiates "A" as such must also be posited, with the (self-) identity of "A" being established in the thought of the *negation* of this negation. Stated more simply: "A" is "A" by virtue of *not* being "not-A."

This concept of identity has momentous implications. It establishes as the first law of thought that all "rational" thinking must proceed in terms of negations and binary oppositions. Moreover, if identity is negation of negation, and "otherness" is only the negative moment in a *self*-relation, then "truth is complete only in the unity of identity and difference, and hence consists in this unity."[2] In concrete terms, this thesis is played out famously, for example, in Hegel's phenomenological account of the essential origin of selfhood as one that begins with a battle to the death for prestige and has its immediate resolution in a master/slave relation. Such inequities persist, until in absolute knowledge, which is the "true" form of selfhood, all difference as such has been "sublated" (*aufgehoben*), and all otherness-to-self has been rendered "inessential."

That Heidegger should be troubled by this concept of identity is scarcely surprising. His express project is to reflect (*nachdenken*) on the essence of metaphysics in order to bring to light as such the hitherto "unthought" ontological *difference* of Being and beings. In this way, he seeks to overcome the leveling hegemony of metaphysics, and to preserve what he considers to be "the

multi-dimensionality peculiar to the domain of thinking."[3] As the fulfillment of the metaphysical tradition, Hegel's concept of identity could hardly be further from Heidegger's thinking. For in that conception, the "ontological difference" proves to be absolutely, essentially no difference at all.

In that place of Hegel's metaphysical concept of identity, Heidegger thinks of identity in terms of a "sameness" (*das Selbe*), which he characterizes enigmatically as a "belonging-together of what is different through a gathering by way of difference."[4] The intent of this characterization is less puzzling, if one recalls by way of contrast that in the Hegelian case, the moment of difference is posited as negation, and although essential *as a moment*, in truth it resolves into the "unity" (*Einheit*) of identity. In Heidegger's understanding of "sameness," the moment of "difference" is thought of as a differentiation in the essence of the matter itself, yet one in which the terms "encounter each other in the same only when and as long as they remain determinate in the differentiation of their essence" (*PLT*, 218). Still, as Heidegger himself might concede, this understanding of identity as sameness is the name for a matter of thinking (*Sache des Denkens*), not a doctrine to be received. For it leaves open the question of what, if not negation, *differentiates* in the essence of sameness, and hence what in each case holds the same together as such in difference as the particular "identity" that it is.

As one might expect, Derrida responds to this Hegelian/Heideggerian *problématique* in large measure by sidestepping it. Following Saussure, he represents identity in terms of "diacritical" difference; that is to say, identities are constituted not as positive terms in themselves, but in and through a network of differences that obtain between and among terms. In this understanding there is no singular "logic" that connects the terms in one way only, and hence no singular, centered determination of identity. Identity, then, is always deferred, always yet to come. This is the case, then, for our *self*-identity too, which is represented as always already in play and in question.

All of the essays collected in this section move in and around this issue of identity and difference in its post-Hegelian formulation. Broadly speaking, what they have in common is a critique of the speculative closure and "indifference" that is now typically regarded as fundamental to the edifice of metaphysics, and a concern for reformulating how, beyond metaphysics, the issue of identity, and of self-identity in particular, is to be addressed.

In the first essay of this section, "When Truth Becomes Woman: Males Traces and Female Signs," Eve Tavor Bannet takes issue with Derrida, contesting the account of phallogocentrism provided in his "classical" study, *Éperons/Spurs*. The structural basis of that account – that "the sign reveals and conceals a trace of that which is Wholly Other – is something which, as Eve Bannet avows in the perfect tense with a pluperfect tone, "we have *always already* said." The specific terms of that structure, and the argument that Derrida builds upon it, are also by now quite familiar. The history of Truth in the West, Derrida contends, derives from a particular gendering of signs and traces, that is, where the sign is male, and the trace is female. Accordingly, "the question for Derrida . . . is the extent to which truth becomes different [and] . . . differently, when we change the genders around." This is the question for Bannet too. But, against Derrida, it is her contention that when "Truth Becomes Woman in

Derrida's fashion," that is, according to his "*styles*," "it does not become Woman at all."

The focus of Bannet's critique is the "absurd reversal" she finds in Derrida's regendering of signs and traces. In this reversal, Bannet contends, "the sign, the writing, and the philosopher Become Woman by abdicating self . . . in order to be for another, and to become the passage through which the other can enter language and thought." This may seem like a noble gesture, a recovery of the effaced other within and beyond. But Bannet asks rhetorically: "Are death and castration really the entry into life?" This question contains a number of critical gestures. In Derrida's reversal, the male sign denies itself in order to become woman, yet to become woman "in the most cliché and phallocentric way." In the event, far from abandoning his old tyrannical place, the philosopher re-establishes it with a vengeance. For with the reversal, "Woman, Truth, Philosophy, will speak at *his* dictation," the philosopher/sign, abdicating self to become woman in order to envelop and develop the seminal spur to writing, now become male trace. Yet in this move, the goal remains the same, that is the pure epiphany of what is concealed and inexpressible – whether Phallus or Hole. What is called for instead, Bannet avows, is a becoming of truth "through the alliance of male and female bodies, in a process which," in Irigaray's words, "is 'faithful to life . . . as it is: sexed'." With this process comes a revelation that is *infini* – infinite and unfinished. Yet "because the revelation is unfinished, always partial and incomplete, we cannot rest in the trace or the sign."

The second essay in this section, P. Chrisopher Smith's "Orality and Writing: Plato's *Phaedrus* and the *Pharmakon* Revisited," also deals with Derridean texts. Smith re-examines the now familiar thesis of Derrida's essay, "Plato's Pharmacy," to the effect that Plato displaces and marginalizes writing in favor of a phonocentrism that in turn gives birth to the whole tradition of metaphysics as a metaphysics of pure presence. Smith contests this thesis in four broad moves.

First, Smith presents the principal themes of Derrida's deconstructive exposition on its own terms. On Derrida's reading, Plato mistakenly projects into the experience of hearing oneself speak, a pure presence to self in which nothing is absent or deferred. He then deludes us (and himself) into thinking that we can pass through this moment of the soul's *s'entendre parler* to a pure intuition of unrepresented truth in itself. The truth in itself, presumed at first to be occluded and absent as such, is thus (wrongly) supposed to be made fully present once and for all. Smith contends, however, that in claiming that Plato's text valorizes orality over writing, Derrida's reading gets things backwards. "I would contend," Smith writes, "that in the end Plato and 'metaphysics' are not attacking writing as secondary to speaking, but on the contrary, attacking speaking and the oral tradition by turning to the paradigm of mathematics, where the voiced sign was in fact always entirely secondary to the written sign." Smith's third move is to highlight the essential "temporality" of hearing oneself speak in contrast to the essential "spatiality" of writing. In terms of this contrast, it is speaking, and not writing, that best exhibits the "differance" that Derrida himself celebrates. Fourth, Smith concludes his essay by reminding us of the connection between Plato's attack on sophistry and the attack on orality,

as well as reminding us how it is that writing and not speaking allows for the distance of a pure presence to self.

The third essay in this section, Richard Kearney's "Ethics of the Narrative Self," reprises a conception of the self and self-identity in terms of narrative against the background of a perceived "crisis of self" thought to lie in the "post-modern declarations of the 'death of man'." Drawing principally upon the work of Ricoeur, he makes the case that this narrative conception is the "best" alternative between the extravagance of a postmodern decentering of the self, and the static, substantialist conceptions of selfhood provided by modern philosophy. Now, from German Idealism, we have already learned that the self is essentially self-constituting, defining itself as such in the present moment by projecting a future and appropriating a past. Kearney explicates this process of self-constitution as a *narrative* structure, that is, a process wherein we establish our (self-) identity by realizing the story of a life. In the wake of the existential retreat from Idealism, we have also learned that our self-constitution is essentially *situated*, limited by an "other" that nevertheless enters into its self-constitution. This limiting otherness sets the bounds of the stories we can possibly tell.

4

WHEN TRUTH BECOMES WOMAN

MALE TRACES AND FEMALE SIGNS

Eve Tavor Bannet

The sign reveals and conceals a trace of that which is Wholly Other – we have always already said so, long before Levinas and Derrida. The trace is a trace of the Spur to writing, whether we call it "Truth," "Infinite," "Inspiration," or – like Derrida in his "new affirmative phase of deconstruction"[1] – "the other without me, beyond me, in me."[2] The trace is a trace of the Spur to writing, and it is "encrypted" in the sign. The sign is a writing, a differential system, material and visible, whether in the medium of natural phenomena, of meta-phoric images, or of *langue-parole*. Its function, at least in principle, is to bear witness – to be what Levinas calls "a sign of the gift of the sign"[3] – and thus to put us on the track of the trace, and on the spoor of the Spur. When Truth Becomes, therefore, it becomes as a sign; it becomes as a sign which conceals and reveals a trace of Infinite Wisdom and Truth.

This immemorial preunderstanding of semiology inhabits the conjuncture between poetry, prophecy, mysticism, and philosophy.[4] So it is not surprising that Derrida should have had to come to grips with it in the late 1970s and 1980s when he was trying to return philosophy to poetry and the Sacred. In *Éperons/Spurs*, his classical study of phallogocentrism, everything turns for Derrida on the genders we attribute to the trace and the sign. For Derrida is arguing that the history of truth in the West, the history of this truth as error, derives from a particular gendering of traces and signs. The question of truth for him and for us, therefore, turns on the extent to which truth becomes different, on the extent to which truth becomes differently, when we change the genders around. In this essay, I am going to be arguing that When Truth Becomes Woman in Derrida's fashion, it does not become Woman at all; and I am going to be looking at some other ways that, for women, Truth might Become.

It is characteristic of the phallogocentrism of the West that the trace has always been of the female gender. *She* has always been *his* muse. And his Muse is a desiccated woman. In Kierkegaard's, Petrarch's, and Dante's poetic and

philosophical texts, for instance, the real woman – Regina Olsen, Laura, and Beatrice – has been transmuted into a Spur to *his* quest, into a spoor to be followed in *his* sublime ascent, and into a marker for the epiphany which calls to *him* from behind the veil. The real woman – Regina, Laura, Beatrice – has been divested of the children hanging at her breast and of her inconvenient husband, of *her* flesh and *her* life, of *her* knowledge and *her* desire. She has been encrypted in his writing as a *Spur* (in German, as Derrida reminds us, as trace, track, index, mark of truth's seduction, of its indecipherability, and of its infinite distance from man (*E/S*, 38). Regina, Laura, and Beatrice are precisely that which only is *sous rature*.

But then his desire has really never been for *her*. As the iconography indicates and iterates from the first, whatever male poets, philosophers, and divines have lusted to know, even in the biblical sense, it has not been (a) woman.

> A damsel came in with these squires, holding between her two hands a grail. She was beautiful, gracious and splendidly garbed, and as she entered with the grail in her hands, there was such a brilliant light that the candles lost their brilliance, just as the stars do when the moon or the sun rises. After her came a damsel holding a tailleor of silver. The grail which preceded her was of refined gold; and it was set with precious stones of many kinds, the richest and costliest that exist in the sea or in the earth. Without question, those set in the grail surpassed all other jewels.[5]

Beautiful, gracious, and splendidly garbed as they may be, these eminently interchangeable damsels in Chrétien's *Conte del Graal* are both upstaged by the grail – the jewelled dish containing the mass-wafer, the transubstantiated body of Christ, which the damsels parade back and forth before a still puzzled and quiescent knight. As Beatrice's "crown of glory" only consists of "reflecting from herself the eternal rays,"[6] so here the brilliant light, the matchless gems, the richest values, and the costliest mystery attach to the *Corpus Christi* and its vessel, eclipsing the damsel's body and soul. It is not her person but His divine Corpus, not her graciousness but Grace, which are constructed as objects of male desire.

Thus, if in some versions of the Grail story the knight has to be tricked into sleeping with the grail-bearing maiden and in others her chastity and virginity are emphasized, it is because the damsel's function in his love-affair with the male god is only to trip-start her errant knight's desiring-machine – to arouse in him an impulse and an energy which he can reappropriate and displace from her to Him. As Beatrice knows (no doubt with infinite, weary patience), this has always already been her function for Dante too:

> I turned to Beatrice, but she had heard
> Before I spoke and granted me a sign,
> Making more great the wings of my desire.   (*DC*, Canto 11, 19–21)

If in some versions of the Grail story, like Mallory's, the grail-bearing maiden is invisible and in others, she simply at a certain moment disappears from view, it is to underline the necessity of this displacement of aroused male love and

desire. This is also what speaks in Kierkegaard's aborted engagement to Regina: "I could be happier in my unhappiness without her than with her; she had moved me, and I would have like, more than liked to have done everything. But there was a divine protest, that is how I understood it. . . . The first thing to be decided was the seeking and finding of the Kingdom of Heaven."[7] Consummation with her – or such proximity as would lay bare the device by showing that she had been robbed of everything but her beckoning surface – would cause the mechanism to fail. As Nietzsche points out, to work "her magic and most powerful effect," the woman must act on him from a distance.[8]

The secret of the Kingdom of Heaven which the male poet-philosopher seeks is also always already imbedded in the iconography of this displacement: in the image of the virgin holding between her two hands a grail which dispenses to every knight "such meats and drinks as he best loved in the world" (*G*, 174). The point here is not only that the life-giving, sustenance-giving, self-sacrificing and "sweet self-giving" qualities of the mother[9] are bottled up in the virgin, and then transferred to the sacred vessel so that Jesus can become "our mother."[10] The point is that by holding out to man the *Corpus Christi*, what the woman is offering him is the image of himself: the image of himself as human *and* divine, as man *and* god. Her supreme gift is to satisfy what Dante calls his "longing . . . to see that Essence wherein we behold / How God and our own nature were made one" because, as Kierkegaard agrees, for the male poet-philosopher, "it is this divine side of man, this internal action, which means everything" (*DC*, Canto 11, 40–1; *KA*, 5). What he has really desired – what he has longed to identify, unite with, and possess – is this image of himself.

This is also why – when she merges with the overflowing vessel itself, the source of more than human wisdom, life, and truth, and appears in the text as Philosophia, Natura, Ecclesia, or Muse – the woman still remains a cardboard surface. Her function is still to give him back the image of himself – to mirror back to the male philosopher-poet his own male-stream philosophy, theology, and truth[11] and to allow *him* to figure not merely as a man, but also as a God. For the traditional philosopher-poet, the proper function of woman as *Spur* – trace, track, index, mark – of truth's becoming is always already to give *him* stature and identity, and to allow *him* to walk tall:

> Whomsoever the Muses honour, they pour sweet dew upon his tongue, and from his lips flow gracious words. All the people look to him as he settles causes with true judgments; . . . and when he passes through a gathering, they treat him as a God with gentle reverence, and he is conspicuous among the assemble: such is the holy gift of the Muses to men.[12]

For it is equally characteristic of the phallogocentrism of the West that the sign has always already been of the male gender. Truth, and the Muse as its trace, can only speak their being or nonbeing, their nature or supernature, through him. The point here is not merely that the stylus, the style, and the writing have always been in men's hands, or that the steles and monuments of culture have always been erected by and to men. As Lacoue-Labarthe reminds us through his mocking quasi-Heideggerian puns on the stele and the *Ge-Stell*,

the *Stand* and the *Gegen-Stand*, the sign is only visibly a sign, only present as a sign, if it will stand – like man as opposed to animals, and like man as opposed to woman.[13] The sign is an erection, and *as* an erection, it is stele, monument, rapier, stylus, imprint, and visible mark.

We should pause to recall here that male and female belong to the physical world, where together they engender most living things; and that it is a fundamental principle of that semiology where Truth Becomes as a sign, that whatever makes no sense in terms of the manifest order of the physical world, makes no sense of the Infinite or of spiritual experience, and has no truth. There need be no identity, no transparency, no visibility of the trace of truth in the material sign; but truth, physical phenomena, and the sign have to be allied and aligned or there can be no tracking of traces in and through manifest signs. The gendering of the trace as female and of the sign as male breaks this cardinal rule. And the result is not merely an error, but an absurdity. For this makes *her* the seminal element which *he* bears forth. And, in a remarkable feat of engineering, it inflates what is generally not a particularly visible organ into a monumental sign, which usurps and supplies the place of the much more blatant and enduring visibility of her swollen belly.

What Derrida takes issue with, therefore, when he rewrites this traditional Western gendering of traces and signs in Jewgreek, is the aggressively virile gendering of the sign. *Éperons/Spurs* is subtitled "Nietzsche's styles" because, for Derrida, it is a question of alternative styles which philosophers used to inscribe truth in language and thought. The style of the stylus and of the stele is the style of the dogmatic philosopher – with his quest for clarity and self-evidence, his clear-cut discourses in pro and contra, his determination to penetrate the veils of ignorance and capture Truth in order to make *his* imprint and his mark and to erect a monument to himself. But, as Derrida says, "the woman (the truth) will not allow herself to be taken" (*E/S*, 54). At that juncture of poetry, mysticism, and philosophy where she becomes his inspiration, *she* "will inscribe the truth. . . . She writes [herself]. . . . The style, [the stylus] are hers" (*E/S*, 56).

In this other style of philosophy, therefore, it is she, the woman, the truth who comes to man and speaks in him as "the other without *me*, beyond me, in me." The philosopher is possessed by her and writes at her dictation. His signs become signs of *her* gift of the sign, the channel for *her* becoming. The sign, the stylus, and the stele – those monuments of man's own making – collapse, invert, and transmute into a birth canal. In this style of philosophy, therefore, the sign, the writing, and the philosopher Become Woman: "'I' have a chance of being woman, of changing sex," says Derrida. "'I' can give birth" (*PAR*, 281).

In Derrida's regendering of traces and signs, therefore, Truth Becomes Woman twice: as trace and as sign. The sign is female because it is the receptive moment, and the channel through which Truth Becomes – becomes language, history, part of what is spoken and done. And the trace is female, because the woman who is divided and diverted from *her* knowledge and from her proper truth – like Regina, Laura, and Beatrice – embodies the truth about truth, which is its *differance*. *Differance* means that truth is always already cut off and separated from any proper identity and from all possibility of identification, that truth has always already been diverted and deferred. The truth of the trace

therefore lies in acknowledging this fact: in indicating its difference from truth, in indicating that truth cannot "take place," and that the trace is not itself truth. This is why, for Derrida, woman can represent the trace and why "woman is the name of this non-truth of truth" – because she knows that if woman is truth, there is no truth, that the truth does not take place, and that one doesn't have the truth" (*E/S*, 50, 52).

Unlike the grail-bearing maiden, woman as the trace of the non-truth of truth comes to the ear, rather than to the eye/I. She comes to the philosopher-poet as a voice sounding the "*Animadverso*" of language – its *anima-de-verso*, or animating, pneumatic other side. Her gift is a tracery, part chance and part design, of all the other sounds, all the other signifieds, and all the other tongues always already encrypted in the sign. It is she who brings the detours to "*De{s} Tours de Babel*" and the heard (*oui*) to the affirmation (*oui*) when it is cited for a second time (*oui, oui*). It is she who indicates (*montre*) the monster (*monstre*, *Zeichen*, *sign*) in "Heidegger's Hand" when it grasps (*Begriff*) the handiwork (*Handwerk*) which is present-at-hand (*Vorhandensein*, *Zuhandensein*) or gets a handle (*behandeln*) on Truth in its manu-scripts. It is the re-mark of *her* stylus and her style which makes Heidegger's hand fall away (*tombe*) by burying it (*tombe*) under the weight of all its other possible donations, and by introducing that divergence (*écart*), that distance and difference of the hand from itself, which (de)monstrates that the hand "shows nothing," and that the sign is only a perfectly monstrous "monster without meaning," all sound and fury, signifying nothing (*PSY*, 421–2). It is also by the re-mark (*re-trait*) of *her* stylus that the textual tissue is torn (*trait*, *Riß*) and that an opening is cut onto the abyss: the withdrawal at/of the origin, the immemorial retreat (*retrait*) of Truth.

This is why, as the woman's voice says in *Feu la cendre*: "The best paradigm of the trace for him is not, as some people have thought and as he perhaps once thought too, the hunter's trail, the beaten track, the furrow in the sand, the furrow in the sea, the love of the *pas* (step, not) for its imprint – but cinders (what remains without remaining of the holocaust, of the all-consuming flame, the conflagration's incense)."[14] For him, the paradigm for the trace is no longer that of the hunt, the capture and the chase, as it was for Dante or for the grail-knight because the woman no longer has to keep her distance to work her "magic and most powerful effect." On the contrary: it is by her very proximity – by coming to him as the other within the Same, and as "the other beyond me, in me" – that woman distances Truth from the philosopher-poet and displaces the image of man. It is by her very closeness to him – as the underside of his own familiar tongue, as the contra-band sounding under the band of his speech – that she displaces Truth from the sign and shows men that their desire for the Stele and the Stance, their desire for their own erections, has always already been misplaced: "Distancing (de-stancing) is here at the heart of the thing" (*PAR*, 28).

At the same time, although this evidently involves a negative, de(con)-structive step (*pas-à-pas*) – not to mention a fundamental castration – the paradigm here is, at least in principle, not the nihilistic paradigm of a negation enamored of itself and content to rest in the admiration of its own imprint and its own mark. For that would only be to erect another Truth, and to put

Woman in man's place. To differ from his by deferring Truth and affirming that she does not have it, and to open onto a Wholly Other, she must consume herself as well as him. She must lay waste them both, but in such a way as to leave behind some ineffable and untranslatable remainder as an infinite intimation and as an intimation of Infinity. That is why cinders (*cendres*) are the best paradigm of the trace for Derrida: because cinders are all that remain of her body and of his after the holocaust, and because cinders (*cendres*) are where "It enters" (*s'entre*) transforming (*andre*, *anders*, *androgenous*) his phallus into an opening by the sacrifice of all he loves best, in a conflagration which leaves in his wake the bitter-sweet smell of burning – the pyre's incense – as man's offering and would-be connective to God.

Jean-Luc Nancy complains that readers-users of deconstruction treat "the undecidable" as the truth instead of focusing on how "the Other comes to perforate the Same, in a specular abyss or epiphany."[15] But it seems to me that the real undecidability in this writing has to do with whether there *is* an epiphany at all, and with whether the ineffable does indeed come through. "Can the dust praise Thee, can it declare Thy truth?"[16] Are death and castration really the entry to life?

In Derrida's regendering of traces and signs, the philosopher Becomes Woman by accepting (engineering?) his own demise and by indicating that, like woman, he now has the sexual organ that "is counted as none."[17] The philosopher signs, signals, and signifies this sacrifice of his (historical/cultural/personal) phallus performatively, each time as if for the first time, but "writ-[ing] with a language which shows nothing . . . [and] says nothing that exists beyond this event which she (the woman, the language) constitutes."[18] The sign, the writing, and the philosopher thus Become Woman by abdicating self ("writing with not with . . . not even [his] self") in order to be for another, and to become the passage through which the other can enter language and thought. Deconstructive writing thus offers

> an other in-vention (coming in) or rather an in-vention of/from the other who traverses the economy of the same; that is, by miming or repeating the same, it gives a venue to the other, lets the other come. I am careful to say *let the other come* for, if the other is precisely that which does not get invented, deconstructive initiative and inventiveness can only consist in opening, in de-enclosing, in de-stabilizing structures of foreclosure to leave a passage for the other.   (*PSY*, 60)

In this mythography, then, Woman becomes both a cypher for Derrida's philosophy of *differance*, and the sign of a deconstructive writing. And Truth Becomes Woman only to write the philosophy of Derrida. In a curious reversal, therefore, the woman who comes to inspire the philosopher, Derrida, turns out to be inspired by him. As Luce Irigaray says, speaking for Woman: "I was only your cover (*gaine*), your reverse side, your inversion, your Mime. . . . You filled me with *your* voids. You heaped me with *your* lacks."[19]

Setting aside for the moment the question of what this does to women, I am going to call this absurd reversal the revenge on Derrida of that semiological

principle which requires truth, signs, and the physical world to be allied and aligned. For when Truth Becomes in Derrida, it becomes through the hymen of two women – two women who are conceived in the most clichéd and phallo-centric way (as receptivity, passivity, and non-truth, and as lacking a body part), and who therefore have *nothing* to say of and for themselves. The union of two such women cannot possibly give birth to living signs. Their hymen puts both under sentence of death: come, kill yourself (*viens, tu toi*) says the trace coming: come, I in pieces, I die (*viens, je mort/s*) sighs the sign as she comes. In the normal order of things, moreover, the complete repression and exclusion from this delightful hymen of the male, will only ensure his violent return (as Derrida unwittingly demonstrates).

Consider the inconvenience of a spur to writing which insists that truth does not take place and that one doesn't have the truth. When she, the truth, the trace comes to the philosopher and speaks in him – she has absolutely nothing to tell him. Imagine him now, in his posture of pure female receptivity, before that blank page which is waiting to be filled with Signs and Sendings. The hymen of these two women produces – nothing. What is to be done? The solution magically appears to Derrida at Oxbridge, when he buys that postcard showing Plato dictating truth and philosophy to his master, Socrates. Eureka! She, the truth, the trace, can be as silent as Socrates on this postcard. Like Plato, he, the philosopher Derrida, will tell her what she said. Woman, Truth, Phil-osophy will all speak at his dictation. It is "the Law of [the] Genre," "the Law of Gender (*genre*)," the law of engendering signs, says Derrida, that "he engenders her." "The law in its feminine aspect is borne of him for whom she becomes the law . . . it is the child of his affirmation" (*PAR*, 284, 283). The male philosopher has returned, quite brutally, to his old tyrannical place, and whatever Truth has Become, it is not Woman.

For Truth, images, and the physical world to be allied and aligned, the trace – the seminal spur to writing – must be male, and the writing, which envelops and develops it, and which bears witness to its nature or supernature, must be female. But a simple reversal of genders will not do. For, of course, women have also always already been placed on the side of the flesh as opposed to the spirit, on the side of matter as opposed to mind, and on the side of things as opposed to the truth of things; and, as feminists have shown, this identifica-tion with "Nature" has silenced women as effectively as becoming trace and Muse.

I would argue, however, that what we reject when we reject this identifica-tion of women with "nature" is the imaginary of nature which men invented, in the presence of a silenced Muse, to ensure and fill her silence. I would also argue that what we reject when we reject the identification of women with matter as opposed to mind, is the binary opposition itself. For we know that we will not be able to live in nature until we can live it *both* as body *and* as mind. And it becomes as the alliance of two different bodies and two different minds. For we, also, say that we want to live in a mutually supportive space, where differences ally and supply each other's lacks, and where there are no exclusions – even (and sometimes especially) of *him*. Translated into the language of traces and signs, this means that When Truth Becomes, it does not become Woman and it does

not become Man. It Becomes through the alliance of embodied male traces and of spiritualized female signs. Here is one way this might be experienced on the scene of writing.

Whatever spurs us to writing might "come out of nowhere," but it does not come without a form. It has some body to it, however slight; there is a niggling "something there" at the back of our minds; there is a nagging pointer, as if to say "look in this direction" or "try it like this"; there is a prod to be checked out or an indistinct sense of a shape – there is a trace. This male trace is not formless matter; but, it is matter which is not yet distinct, visible, or articulate, the seed of our subsequent work. She, the Writing, takes this seed and makes it into something else, by mixing it with what is her own. For the sign is not a corpse, an empty shell, or even a megaphone; it has a life and a mind of its own. It is this life of hers which she adds to the trace, as she, the Writing, takes this seed and makes it into something else, by mixing it with what is her own. For the sign is not a corpse, an empty shell, or even a megaphone; it has a life and a mind of its own. It is this life of hers which she adds to the trace, as she, the Writing, envelops it, develops it, lets it grow in directions of her choosing, and supplies its lacks according to her lights. She, the Writing, is therefore quite different from the trace, but they are each other's condition of possibility. She, the Writing, and he, the Trace, are allied by their difference – are allied because of their difference – and she envelops him as he envelops her.

As Irigaray points out, when Truth Becomes through the alliance of male and female bodies, in a process which is "faithful to life . . . as it is: sexed,"[20] the trace and the sign mime an incarnation of the Divinity and an annunciation of the mystery, on earth as well as in heaven, which is quite different from the abstract, unisex self-mirroring of male-stream Western philosopher-poets.[21] For this coupling of male and female elements returns us to what Irigaray calls the "god-couple" or "coupled God [*un dieu couple*]."[22] It returns us to the God who made (humans in) the Divine *I*mage by making male *and* female, and for whom, therefore, there has to be sexual difference "for God to become incarnate in the flesh" (*CM*, 99). And this coupling of male and female elements in God, in turn, takes us back to the mysteries of those "Oriental traditions which speak to us of the energetic, aesthetic and religious fecundity of the sexual act" (*ESD*, 21).

In this older dispensation, the question of Truth still turns on the proximity and distance of gendered traces and signs each to each. This is why, as Irigaray reminds us, in those "Oriental traditions" which understand the two sexes as "giving each other the seeds of life and eternity" (*ESD*, 21), the alliance of traces and signs has always already been represented as a marriage. But the metaphor invoked here is not at all that of our traditional Western notion of marriage – as a union where two become one corpus and one corpse by virtue of one "cover-ing" the other, eclipsing the other, in that excess of proximity we call identity. Nor does it resemble Western representations of courtship as the quest of a solitary male hunter for his infinitely distant spiritual mistress, a quest culminating and terminating in the capture of its object and/or in the consumption of the epiphany.

In those other "Oriental traditions" of which Irigaray speaks, the alliance of

traces and signs is figured as a sacred marriage between two different bodies, who join and separate, separate and come together, in a courtship which has always already been consummated, and which is always yet to be consummated anew. Forever linked by the desire she always and again arouses for him and by his infinite yearning for her, male trace and female sign part and draw close in an eternal return as various and recurrent as the waning and waxing of the moon as she changes her position relative to the rays of the sun.

In this other metaphor of marriage, what matters is what passes between the two: between male and female, trace and sign, human couples and the coupled God. What stretches between them is not something to be penetrated, cut through, burned away, vacated, or abolished. And what goes between them is neither a means nor a path, neither an incision nor a hole. For as Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément say, "We do not circle round the Supreme Hole – we have no reason as *women* to give our allegiance to the negative."[23] If anything, what comes between two is an interval which punctuates both the "time of union and of separation" (*ESD*, 185) and which makes repetition of difference, distance, and separation the precondition for the recurrence of desire, proximity, and union.

In her readings of Diotima and of the male and female cherubs in the Ark of the Covenant, Irigaray insists on the necessity for such an interval. There is an interval between those male and female cherubs on the ark who "come to the encounter from opposite directions," because this interval makes it possible for them sometimes to turn towards each other and sometimes to turn away," completing the cycle of their solitude to return to the other" (*CM*, 56 ff.; *ESD*, 185) once more. It is also across the interval between them – and indeed, in and through that very between (*entre*) – that living "births from the body and from the mind" and the Divine Presence come (*s'entre*). Diotima too knows all about this *entre*. She knows that between ignorance and knowledge, poverty and wealth, man and woman, mortals and God, what enters in is the distance and the difference that permits growth and change and the constant becoming of living things. She knows *entre* as the flow relating one being to another and "permitting the encounter, and transmutation or transvaluation between the two" (*ESD*, 28). And she knows *entre* as the place of generation and creativity, the place where the living love and where eternity enters time.

On the scene of writing, this metaphorology of marriage transforms the character and the roles of the feminine. For in her proximity and her distance from the trace with which she is allied, she, the Writing, heralds what Derrida calls "the advent of the event" as an act of pure relation. Distanced from her others – from the trace and from us – or turned in upon herself in a gesture of mere self-reflexivity, the Writing darkens like the waning moon, which continues to preen even as it merges back into the inconsequence and oblivion of vacant space. This is precisely what reawakens desire to turn back to the other. For it is precisely as a relation to the other – to the trace and to us – and as the enabling narration of that relation, that she, the Writing, becomes both the Spoor and the Spur; both the Memorial and the Call; both the Speculum in which we see as through a glass darkly, and the Seductress forever beckoning us to cavort with her body – glass, glas, cla, lac, egla – and to lose ourselves in her

tresses/traces until *Glas(s)* becomes *Gilah* – revelation. The revelation is infinite because it is unfinished (*infini*). It is no longer a question here either of having the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, or of having *no* truth but the non-Truth of truth – either of having a Phallus or a Hole. We are always between ignorance and knowledge, between the phallus and the hole, and the revelation is unfinished because it is always partial and incomplete. This is important because, as Michèle le Doeuff says, the way to "dispense with the logocentric phallocratic phantasmagoria" and its sterile binary oppositions is to "cease wishing to mask the incomplete nature of all theorization," and to accept that "there is a portion of non-knowledge in every philosophical enterprise."[24]

Because the revelation is unfinished, always, partial and incomplete, we cannot rest in the trace or in the sign. Because "knowledge is always defective, but necessary all the same" (*PI*, 118), we cannot hold (on) to the signs, and we cannot hold up without them. So we must love them and we must leave them, let them stand and let them fall, learn what we can from them and let them go. But this is not a gesture of cynicism or despair: it is only to recognize that writing too obeys the rhythm of life. Like the hours and the days, the traces come and the traces are forgotten. The metaphors return, but never quite the same way. There is writing without end, but each time it is different, and the revelation is unfinished because it carries on.

ORALITY AND WRITING

PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS* AND THE *PHARMAKON* REVISITED

P. Christopher Smith

I want to make the case here that as arbitrary and far-fetched as it might be, and consequently repellent to traditional classicists, Jacques Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy" is a crucial, indispensable, and uncircumventable contribution to Plato interpretation.[1] For this work, in a deconstructive variation, brings to bear on Plato Heidegger's radical *Destruktion* of Plato's and metaphysics' privileging of timeless, statically present being over the being that happens in time, the privileging of *ousia* over *genesis*. It brings to bear on Plato, that is to say, Heidegger's revolutionary recovery of an "earlier" unity of being and time in an "inceptive" thought "closer to the origin."[2] In Derrida's hands this privileging of static presence over temporal flux becomes the privileging of voiced speech over writing. In what follows I will argue that, in fact, the privileging of static presence implies just the opposite, namely a privileging of spatial, visual writing, of *graphein* and *grammata*, of the graphic and diagrammatical, over temporal, acoustical voice, a thesis for which I find considerable support in Eric Havelock.[3] Still, it is Derrida who is the real provocateur here and the one who confronts us squarely with the pivotal ontological and grammatological questions: namely, how do voiced speech and writing figure in Plato's privileging of static presence over concomitant presence and absence? Moreover, just what is the relationship of voiced speech to writing in Plato in the first place?

Or better, just what *are* the relationship*s* of voiced speech to writing? For following Derrida's deconstructive strategies, I will try to show that Plato is seminally self-contradictory in regard to the apparent priority he gives to speaking over writing in the *Phaedrus*. Prodded, sometimes even by Derrida's most extravagant interpretations, among them his "tracing" of *pharmakon* or drug, to *pharmakos* or prisoner-scapegoat, we will see in our investigation of the *Phaedrus* that Plato wavers indecisively on the border between the older oral, dramatic tradition and the newer literate, mathematical one, sometimes pushing forward into the new and other times pulling back into the old.

Our approach will be as follows: first, we will try to clarify carefully the

interpretive principles of Derrida's deconstruction of the *Phaedrus* and to illus-
trate how these principles are to be applied, with expositions of Derrida's
readings of specific passages in the Platonic *opus*. Second, we will go back to the
source of these interpretive principles in Heidegger's penetration behind the
metaphysical privileging of static presence and in his uncovering of the original
concomitance of any being's showing and withholding itself – much as at sea,
still indeterminate shapes are ever emerging from the fog even as they are
lapsing back into it. And having asked in this section just what Heidegger's
Destruktion of the metaphysical superstructure of static presence with no
absence might mean for the relationships to each other of hearing and seeing,
listening and reading, speaking and writing, we will turn, third, to the
Phaedrus again. But this time we will proceed more by Heidegger's *Destruktion*
than by Derrida's deconstruction, which is to say that instead of seeking out
those places in the interstices of Plato's argument about speech and writing
where he contradicts himself, and instead of taking down the hierarchical
ordering that seems to give priority to one of these over the other, we will look
for persistent remnants of an "earlier," experience of being, "closer to the incep-
tion" of thought, that still shimmer through the layers of later metaphysical
thought covering them. In this way we will be able to see, fourth, where
Derrida's bold initiatives eventually went wrong.

For Derrida is right: Plato is thoroughly contradictory in his arguments
about writing and speech. But Derrida is wrong: Plato does not privilege
speech over writing. Indeed, the speeches "written in a soul" (*Phaedrus* 278 a),
of which Derrida rightly makes so much, are not the means of communication
for some vocal and acoustical experience underlying them. Rather, according to
Plato they are the primary semantical expression of the visual dia*gramma*tical,
genos/eidos structure of timeless metaphysical being, a system of signs that, *like
letters*, are statically present and distributed within mental space. *Logos* or
speech has come to mean "reasoning" here, and is now precisely *aneu phōnēs*,
without voice (see *Sophist* 263 e). The acoustical has been eliminated and we are
in the realm of what is seen and known according to the "look" of it (*to eidos*).
Hence it is most of all when Plato falls back on voiced speech, or *logos* in the
sense of talk, that he contradicts himself, and not when he recurs to writing.

I

Reserving criticism for later, let us first restate the principal themes of Derrida's
deconstructive exposition. Contrary to appearances, the text to be read, says
Derrida, in this case the *Phaedrus*, is not to be taken as a self-contained unity
entirely in view and completely penetrable for the interpreter. Rather, as a
crisscrossing of traces of what is precisely not in view and but absent, it with-
holds itself from us even as it shows itself to us. Thus the text inevitably leads
us, who would pick up and follow the track of these traces, in particular the
track of the word *pharmakon*, across the semantic field of this word's linguistic
associations to other uses of it and related words, not only within the text itself,
but in the Platonic *opus* as a whole, and then even to uses and words outside this
opus. In this way we are led beyond the horizons of the present text to what is

absent and outside it, to be sure, but present and inside it, too, precisely by being unwritten there. Thus *pharmakon*, a word that means an alien substance both in the sense of a "remedy" and a "toxin," and that Plato's "Theuth" uses to characterize writing in the *Phaedrus* (274e), is to be traced as it "defers" to *pharmakeia* or administration of a drug, to *pharmakeus* or the one administering the drug, and then even outside Plato's dialogues to *pharmakos*, the disruptive alien from outside the city walls introduced inside and kept in prison there to serve as a whipping boy in times of disaster. For, writes Derrida,

> we do not believe that there exists, in all rigor, a Platonic text, closed upon itself, complete with its inside and its outside. . . . Rather one should simply be able to untangle the hidden forces of attraction linking a present word with and absent word in the text of Plato. (*PPh*, 130)

Crucial here is that any word, of which we would pick up the trace, not be taken as a univocal sign signifying some essential being ever identical with itself and statically present. Unlike "2" which supposedly, at least, signifies univocally the self-identical mathematical *eidos* of duality, *pharmakon* is a sign or indication that in its multivocality points us only to other signs which in turn point us to still others *ad infinitum*. Unlike "2," *pharmakon*, in its differing with itself unstably, in its meaning, not one thing, but now "remedy" and now the contrary "toxin," thus continually propels us beyond itself and refers us to equally ambivalent uses of other neighboring words. However, once the metaphysical superstructure of stabilized eidetic essences is deconstructed and taken away, we are plunged into a radical instability and chaos of meaning. "2" is taken to have its univocal meaning in signifying the metaphysical *eidos* of duality, but with the hypothesis of an *eidos* suspended, as Derrida claims it obviously must be in the case of *pharmakon*, meaning shifts and "slips" from one contrary to the other. Indeed, we might add that it was precisely to put an end to this "slippage" and its exploitation by sophistical word twisters that Plato's "Socrates" goes beyond the physical accounts of the first philosophers and, in fleeing into the *logoi*, that is, arguments themselves, hypothesized the metaphysical *eidos* (*Phaedo* 99d–102a). But following Heidegger in destroying all such metaphysical postulations, Derrida moves in the opposite direction. By subverting the superstructure of static ideas he would set free the "aneidetic" play and oscillation of *pharmakon*'s multiple and self-contradictory senses.

Why? And why choose *pharmakon* for this deconstructive liberation? First, because it is writing that is called a *pharmakon* in the *Phaedrus* (274e), and Derrida's ultimate concern here is to subvert the dominance of voice over writing that in his view characterizes metaphysics from Plato on. As voice has been moved to the center, he maintains, writing has been driven out to the margins and beyond. Like the *pharmakos*, the *pharmakon* of writing is treated as a disruptive alien substance introduced to the inside from outside and best expelled, were it not for the fact that the inside can define itself only in relationship to this outsider that it would both ostracize and incorporate within itself. It is in the *Phaedrus*' treatment of writing as a *pharmakon-pharmakos*, Derrida argues, that the issue of writing is most obviously joined and where

metaphysics of presence and "phonocentrism" have best displayed their self-contradictory origins. What better place than the *Phaedrus* could there be, then, to apply a "deconstruction" and to dissolve in each other such supposedly distinct contraries as "inside/outside," and to show that the text ultimately says the opposite of what it purports to say?

But *pharmakon* is also chosen for a different if related reason: Derrida's deconstructive strategy is also to show that if we were to follow Plato in moving back from what is assumed to be only a copy, a substitute and supplement, to what the copy is supposedly a copy of, we would end not at all where Plato thinks we will, namely at the unmediated comprehension of some sort of originary form, statically present and ever identical with itself, and which itself is not a copy of, a substitute for, and supplement to, anything else rather is what it is "in reality" and "in truth." If, for instance, we were to attempt to trace writing back to the speech or *logos* of which it is said to be the copy, and then speech or *logos* back to the "pure audibility" of one's own speech in full presence to oneself, we would discover that we actually end not at such a "pure audibility" and full presence of speech after all. Instead, we end only at more writing, save that this time the writing is the "writing in the soul," which is to say, the communicative system of expression that differentiates and relates a multiplicity of signs to each other – a *grammar*, as it were. In other words, far from penetrating to some *archē* or starting point for what our signification expresses and communicates, we always still find ourselves only at what we take to secondary expression and communication, the origin of which continues to withhold itself from presence, and which, like the idea of the good itself, *auto to agathon*, remains *epekeina tēs ousias* or beyond presence. As a matter of fact, in this pursuit we were in fact always chasing after a metaphysical phantom that never existed except as a hypothesis; save in our projections of it, there never was a superior static, stabilized essence, an *archē* or origin above and behind the supposedly inferior supplement or sign substituting for it. There were always only signs deferring to other signs in the system. If we look "beyond" writing we see only more writing.

There is, in other words, a hierarchy assumed in the *Phaedrus* that governs the dialogue's entire treatment of speech writing, *logographein*, from its initial thematization at 257 d: at the beginning or origin – *archē* – there is posited a pure presence of eidetic truth to the self of the speaker in what Husserl will later call an *Anschauung* and *Gegenwärtigung*, namely the intuition and presentation to oneself of what is self-evident. In descending from this originary truth there follows that interior *logos* or speech of the self to itself which Husserl will call *Vergegenwärtigung* or representation, then speech as it is uttered to someone else in communication, and then, last, furthest from the origin, and most derivative, this uttered speech as it is written down and recorded (see *PPh*, 135, n. 61 and 166, n. 82). According to this hierarchy the written speech is a replacement for the spoken speech, which has its origin in the speech of the speaker to himself or herself and, ultimately in his or her immediate "intuition" or, better, "audition" of the truth, for in the end Derrida understands Husserl's *Anschauung* acoustically, as *s'entendre parler* or hearing oneself speak.[4] In Derrida's deconstructive exposition, however, this hierarchical structure rising

vertically to the *archē* and origin collapses leaving the web of signs across which we can move only laterally.

Or, to invert the metaphor, metaphysics and its *logos* are in fact exposed as floating in an abyss: there is no getting down to some stable basis at the bottom of their semantical activity, no ground, no foundation beneath it. At any apparent bottom to which one penetrates there is only the aneidetic and variable sign always in contradiction with itself and never the self-identical static thing in itself which the sign is supposed to signify. Ultimately metaphysics and its *logos* rest unstably in the aneidetic oscillations of the universal *pharmakeia*, the "pharmacy" and pharmaceutical brew of all binary distinctions ever dissolving in each other.

Thus in Derrida *to pharmakon* is also a synechdoche, a figure of speech in which a part comes to stand for the whole of something. Like the "hands" in "All hands on deck!", *to pharmakon*, in its oscillations between the opposite senses of remedy and toxin, comes to stand for the whole non-ground of the aneidetic and equivocal, down to which philosophy and *logos* are to be deconstructed; *to pharmakon* stands for the bottomless *pharmakeia*, the "pharmacy" at the bottom of things:

> If the *pharmakon* is "ambivalent," it is because it constitutes the medium in which opposites are opposed, the movement and the play that links them among themselves, reverses them or makes one side cross over into the other (soul/body, good/evil, inside/outside, memory/forgetfulness, speech/writing, etc.). . . . The *pharmakon* is the movement, the locus and the play: (the production of) difference. (*PPh*, 127)

And, Derrida continues, "It is also this store of deep background that we are calling Plato's *pharmacy*" (*PPh*, 128), hence the title of his essay, "Plato's Pharmacy." The task for the deconstructive reader is thus to avoid any translation of *pharmakon*, say as remedy (Robin: *remède*), that would eliminate its inherent ambivalence and self-contradiction and shut down the unstable oscillation between its contrary senses. For if the word appears in its positive sense, say, in Theuth's presentation of writing to Thamus the king (*Phaedrus* 274 c–275 b), it must nonetheless be read "anagrammatically," that is, as a rewriting and re-inscription of the word as it appears elsewhere in other senses. To keep the oscillating play of contrary senses in play a deconstructive interpretation must resist "Platonism," must resist, that is to say, the will to master the play and close it off by imposing one self-identical, noncontradictory sense on the word (see *PPh*, 98).

The *Timaeus*, 89 a–d, Derrida submits, provides the locus at which to observe best this intrinsic oscillation in the sense of *pharmakon*, its tipping back and forth from meaning something good to meaning something bad. For in arguing against the administration of drugs and pharmaceutical therapies, against *pharmakeia*, pharmacy, Plato contends there that remedies or medicines, once introduced into the living organism from outside, only disrupt its native constitution and aggravate the illness (see *PPh*, 100–1). Pharmaceutical treatment implies the aggression of an alien element to which the living being

responds with "metastatic allergic reactions"; hence the "perfection of a living being would consist in its having no relation at all with any outside" (*PPh*, 101). And turning to the *Phaedrus* with this in mind, we can see that precisely this same "system of features" operates in Thamus' response to Theuth's proposed *pharmakon* of writing:

> . . . by trusting in writing they [the readers] will be reminded from outside by means of characters alien to themselves [*dia pistin graphēs exōthen hup' allotriōn tupōn*] and will not remember internally by themselves [*ouk endothen autous huph'autōn anamimnēskomenous*]. So you have found a *pharmakon* not of memory but of reminding [*oukoun mnēmēs, alla hupomnēseōs, pharmakon hēures*].   (*Phaedrus* 275 a; cf. *PPh*, 102)

Mental degeneracy will, therefore, be the inevitable result of the introduction of this *pharmakon* of writing:

> Confident of the permanence and independence of its types (*tupoi*), memory will fall asleep, will not keep itself up, will no longer keep to keeping itself alert, present, as close as possible to the truth of what is.   (*PPh*, 105)

Writing, that is to say, destroys the pure presence to self in the pure audibility of the soul's *s'entendre parler*, its listening to its own *logos* or speech – or so Plato thinks.

For on Derrida's reading Plato mistakenly projects a pure presence to self here in which no reminder of anything absent is needed, no representation (Husserl: *Vergegenwärtigung*), since everything is fully present (*gegenwärtig*) and nothing is absent or deferred. Moreover, this pure cognition would ultimately no longer even be memory, which always presupposes the mediated recovery of what is not yet there, but simply *nous*, direct immediate intuition (Husserl: *Anschauung*) of the self-evident truth (see *PPh*, 109 for the reference to *Republic* 533 b on the unhypothetical intelligibility of the truth). What is more, for Derrida it is the experience of our hearing our own *logos* that gives the appearance of coming closest to this immediacy, the moment of *s'entendre parler* that deludes us into thinking that we could even pass through this to intuition of the unrepresented truth itself. And deluded in this way, we take writing to be the *pharmakon*-supplement, the sign of a sign, the signifier of a phonic signifier (*PPh*, 109–10), a dangerous, penetrating supplement "that breaks into the very thing that would have liked to do without it yet lets itself at once be breached, roughed up, fulfilled and replaced" (*PPh*, 110).

Yet Plato cannot do without the *pharmakon*. Like the Sophists, his Socrates, a stingray, a gadfly, a bee, is a *pharmakeus* too, but one whose *pharmakon*, in casting its spell upon the audience, wards off (*alexei*) the bad *pharmakon* of sophism (see *PPh*, 119–21). The Socratic *alexipharmakon* or counter-drug thus restores the purity of the inside by "bringing charges" against exteriority as a supplement: "It is thus necessary to put the outside back in its place. To keep the outside out" (*PPh*, 128). The dialectical cure by Socratic *logos*, by

cross-examination or *elenchos*, will thus exorcize writing. In this way, however, we are led "outside" the traces we have been tracking of *pharmakeia*, *pharmakon*, *pharmakeus*, and so forth, within the *Phaedrus* and the Platonic *opus* as a whole: we are led to *pharmakos*, the prisoner and whipping boy, a word which is present precisely in being absent from the Platonic texts, "inside," in being "outside." In the Thargelion, the rite of civic purification by beating *pharmakoi* to death and driving the "evil" from their bodies,

> The city's body *proper* thus reconstitutes its unity, closes around the secur-ity of its inner courts, gives back to itself the word that links it with itself within the confines of the agora, by violently excluding from its territory the representative of an external threat or aggression. That representative represents the otherness of the evil that comes to affect or infect the inside by unpredictably breaking into it. Yet the representative of the outside is nonetheless *constituted*, regularly granted its place by the community, chosen, kept, fed, etc., in the very heart of the inside.   (*PPh*, 133)

And just so it is with the *pharmakon* of sophistical speech writing that Socrates subjects to cross-examination in the *Phaedrus*. This exterior writing which invades and disrupts the interior pure presence to self in one's *s'entendre parler*, in one's hearing and understanding one's own speech, is, even so, indispensable for, and constitutive of, the interior it disrupts. As with the *pharmakos*, the *extra muros* is *intra muros* and vice versa (see *PPh*, 133).

Thus with writing too we are involved in constant shuttling between the contradictory poles of binary distinctions: on the one side we have knowledge and memory (*mnēme*, *anamnēsis*) and, on the other, non-knowledge as rememora-tion (*hupomnēsis*). On the one side we have a good repetition of truth that presents and exposes the *eidos* and, on the other, a bad repetition that does not present the *eidos*, but re-presents a presentation, repeats a repetition (*PPh*, 135). Opposite the good writing within the soul we have the bad writing that "displaces its model, provides no image of it, violently wrests out of its element the animate interiority of speech" and that "estranges itself immensely from the truth of the thing itself, from the truth of speech" (*PPh*, 137). Bad writing is the fatherless illegitimate orphan, "uprooted, anonymous, unattached to any house or country" (*PPh*, 144), a signifier freed from *logos* (*PPh*, 145), "a moribund, ignorant, external, mute artifice for the senses," whereas the good writing, of noble lineage (*geneseōs*) and "written in the soul of the learner," is "natural, living, knowledgeable, intelligible, internal, speaking" (*PPh*, 149). But the good writing is "writing" nonetheless. Writing in what sense? The clue here is that the *tupoi*, the types or characters condemned as alien external reminders in the *Phaedrus*, 275 a, are also the paradigm for the archetypes or forms (*eidē*) (see *Republic* 402 d and *PPh*, 112–13, 159): the grammatological system of the letters' relation to, and difference from, each other is the "metaphor" for the collection of the *eidē* into genera and division into species.

How this works is spelled out explicitly in the *Philebus*, where Theuth, the god of writing, reappears, but this time as the one who sorts out and system-atizes the unlimited number of voiced sounds (*phōnai*) by uncovering the

limited number of kinds (*eidē*) of voiced sound, vowels, consonants, and mutes, and by articulating the system of how these elements (*stoicheia*) of sound relate to, and differ from each other, that is, the system of which elements can, and which cannot, combine with each other, or what the *Sophist* dialogue will call the "weave of the forms" (*sūmplokē tōn eidōn*) (259 e; *PPh*, 165). Importantly, in the *Philebus* this knowledge is called the art of letters (*technē grammatikē*) and the one who possesses it is called lettered (*grammatikos*). Hence in acquiring it he has moved behind the acoustical "elements" (*stoicheia*) to the graphic "letters" (*grammata*) (see *Philebus* 18 b–d and *PPh*, 162–3).

As we will see in the third part of this essay, precisely this move from the acoustical to the graphic, from the undifferentiated temporal flow of sensation to the static dia*grammatic genos/eidos* structure behind it and prior to it, is in Plato's own view prerequisite for any science and art. Put another way, before any voiced word can become significant, this graphic structure of differences and relations must be in place, and just this is what Derrida means when *he* says that contrary to the "logocentric" prejudices of the metaphysical tradition, *graphē* precedes *logos*, writing precedes speech. As a matter of fact, then, Plato is a lot closer to Derrida's position then Derrida recognizes.

<div align="center">II</div>

To evaluate this extraordinary thrust of Derrida's we need to go back to the ontology behind his strategy of reading with an eye to what is present and inside the text precisely by its being absent and outside. We need to go back, that is, to Heidegger's *Destruktion* of a metaphysical ontology that privileges the timeless, tenseless being of what is present statically, *stete Anwesenheit* (*ousia, einai*) over the being of what comes to pass in time, *Geschehen* (*genesis, gignesthai*). For Heidegger's point is precisely that whatever comes to pass in time is presenting itself all the while it is withholding and absenting itself. Hence, it is not statically present at all, rather its *prae(s)ens* or being there "before" us entails *ab(s)ens* or being "away from" us; in Heidegger's later, admittedly forced language, its *Anwesen* entails *Abwesen*, its "fading in," we might say, its simultaneous "fading out."

Despite the difficulty in finding words to say it, there is really nothing mysterious about this, and Heidegger provides ample exemplification of what he means. In *Being and Time*, for instance, he points out that human existence, our finite being "there" in the world, is just such a being as this that cannot be construed in terms of being that is statically ever present.[5] Indeed, a faithful phenomenological description of our own "Ek-sistenz" or being would display that we experience ourselves as having come to be out of a past time outside (*ek*) the horizons of our consciousness, a time when we did not exist, all the while we are passing into a time outside the horizons of our consciousness, a time when we will no longer exist. As human beings our being is thus not fully present to us but always in part withheld from us and absent. But not only our own existence but also the things of our world, shoes, pitchers, artworks, dwellings, have this same temporal being of coming to pass. They are present in our awareness only in having arisen from beyond it and in already having

faded away out of it.[6] They neither "are" statically ever present nor "are" fully present. Indeed, in their withholding themselves from us there is always a certain opacity about them and impenetrability: they are present in concomitantly being absent; they are there in simultaneously being no longer there and not yet there. Their "truth" is thus not at all the steady presence of a "look" or *eidos* of the thing "itself" given to the view (*thea*) of some onlooker and beholder (*theōretēs*), rather only a partial emergence from obscurity, an *a-lētheia* or disconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*) in which oblivion and concealment (*lēthē*, *Verborgenheit*) are never eliminated.

But as Heidegger displays, Platonic "metaphysics" sets out precisely to eliminate this opacity and impenetrability of things.[7] This is why it must abstract from the being of what comes to pass and posit a being which "really" is, *to ontōs on* and which, in standing and staying statically in view, is fully and ever present to our awareness. In the place of the appearance-disappearance concomitance of what comes to pass "metaphysics" posits the "look" or *eidos*, the static form of what always is. Hence Heidegger's task becomes that of disclosing the original conjunction of being and time by razing the structure of Platonic "metaphysics" which the tradition has superimposed upon it.

Now before returning to the *Phaedrus* to assess Derrida's deconstructive reading of it critically, two questions arising out of this Heideggerian *Destruktion* of Platonic metaphysics must be addressed: first, how, exactly, do oral and literary expression, respectively, figure in Plato's metaphysical abstraction to the *eidos*? And, second, is it by returning to writing from the priority given to orality that one can take down the edifice of metaphysical constructs and "lay bare," as Heidegger would say, the original being of coming to pass that these metaphysical constructs have covered over? *Or is it not rather by returning to orality from the priority given to writing?* For in opposition to Derrida, I would contend that in the end Plato and "metaphysics" are not attacking writing as secondary to speaking, but on the contrary, attacking speaking and the oral tradition by turning to the paradigm of mathematics, where the voiced sign was in fact always entirely secondary to the written sign, where "two," for instance, was always entirely secondary to "2."

To see why Platonic philosophy takes this turn we need to distinguish between two experiences of the being of the word, the first, oral-auditory and the second, literate-visual. In oral-auditory experience of the word what is expressed comes to pass; it "is" as *genesis* or *gignesthai* in time. For as we experience it, a voiced word arises out of a previous word or previous silence only then to fade into a subsequent word or silence. Each voiced word displaces either a previous word or, if it is the first word, silence, all the while it momentarily defers what is yet to come and defers to it, be this the next word or silence. A voiced word is thus experienced as a self-contradictory conjunction of being and not being: it *is* all the while it is re-ferring, carrying the listeners back, to what *is not* any longer, and pro-(f)-ferring, carrying the listeners forward, to what *is not* yet.

An accurate phenomenological description displays that our experience of the being of written words is quite different. First, as marks on a surface, things written, *ta grammata*, stand steadily at a place in space. Even if the letters and

markings on this surface were put there at some time and will fade at some time into illegibility, we do not experience this temporality as readers of them. And even if as readers *we* must pass in time from one set of letters to the next, from letters that are present to us now to letters that are not yet present, we experience the letters themselves as *spatial and not temporal* being, for we know we can always go to *where* they are at any time and they will always be there. Thus even if letters we have present before us always defer to letters that are absent, we experience letters as *aei onta*, as always-being, accessible "above" and "below" where we are presently reading, or always-being, "there" "some-where" else in some other text. Thus, unlike words that we hear, we do not experience words that we read as coming into being at a time and, in time, passing away.

We must ask, then, if the *Phaedrus*' treatment of writing must be understood quite differently from the way Derrida has understood it. For in the end is it not writing that *is* statically? And is it not writing, therefore, that might best express static metaphysical being? Precisely because it is, I suggest, the *Phaedrus* actually privileges writing over speaking; for only static writing could articulate dia-*gramma*-tically the universal and timeless differences from each other and relations to each other of the *eidē* or static "looks" to things. Orality, on the other hand, since it communicates in the concomitant "fading in" and "fading out" of audible sound, keeps us at the level of what is in coming to pass. Hence, it keeps us at the level of what, in Plato's view, remains ultimately indeterminate and unknowable.

III

But if I am correct, why is it not orality but writing that right at the beginning of the *Phaedrus*' account of it, is linked to the enemy, sophism (see 257 d)? For after all, sophism builds its "art" of confutation on just that indeterminacy of words which I am attributing primarily to orality. Must it not be the written word, then, that is unstable, as Derrida maintains, and not the spoken word? And do not oral words become unstable and subversive only once they are written down, abandoned by their "fathers," and cut off from their supposedly stable origin in speech? (See *PPh*, 142 f., "The Heritage of the *Pharmakon*: Family Scene.")

To evaluate Derrida's contention here, we might best ask, just what the question is which this linking of writing to sophism in Plato is meant to answer.[8] And to find this out we need to go back to the three speeches, one of Lysias's and two of Socrates'. For these three speeches are clearly intended as samples of speech making in general, samples whose particular subject matter, as the *Symposium* makes plain, provided a frequent and customary theme for exercises in epideictic or "show-off" rhetoric: in praising love (*erōs*) promising rhetors could learn to "show their stuff" and, like Agathon in the *Symposium*, best their competitors for the prize. With this in mind we can see that love was never the actual focus of the *Phaedrus* dialogue, but rather speeches as such. And what so impresses the all too impressionable Phaedrus about Lysias's speech is that in reversing the standard "topics" of epideictic rhetoric, *to kalon* and *to*

aischron, it is able to make even such a canonically *kalos* or fair and decent thing as love seem *aischros* or ugly and despicable: ". . . in just this consists its ingeniousness," says Phaedrus (227c; see Aristotle's *Rhetoric* 1358a 36–b 28 on epideictic rhetoric).

With that statement the issue for the entire dialogue is joined: How are we best to defend against sophistical exploitation of any ordinary word's inherent potential to mean opposite things? How are we to defend against a sophistical word twisting that makes a good thing seem bad or, what is worse, a bad thing seem good? How can we best stabilize the meanings or words so that this does not happen? (See, in particular, the *Phaedrus* 260c on the danger whenever "an orator who is ignorant of good and bad undertakes to persuade a community equally ignorant . . . praising . . . bad as good," and so forth.)

Plato has a double and inconsistent answer here. At first glance it appears that the defense against sophistical deception could only be live discussion; it could only be in *dialegesthai* as "talking" (*legesthai*) things "through" (*dia*), which is to say, in putting sophistical inversions of the truth to the test in Socratic cross-examination and exposing them for what they are. And for this to occur the written word must be converted back into the voiced word, of which it is only the notation. The speech *writer*, however, evades the Socratic *elenchos* by passing the written speech on to others, who, when they recite it, just read it off, as Phaedrus just reads off Lysias's speech, and who are themselves unable to invest it with new dialogical life. Indeed Phaedrus, charmed as he is by the speech's rhetorical devices, its copiousness and well-turned phrases, is completely unable to enter into a discussion of the thesis it proposes. Hence there is little point in putting any questions to him about its subject matter. With him *dialegesthai* is impossible, and its author Lysias is, after all, not available for questioning, so the speech stands unchallengeable. This, not their "fatherlessness," is really the point of Socrates' comparison of written words to paintings at 2757d: ". . . if one questions them, he says, they solemnly keep an utter silence."

Thus Socrates does not even attempt to engage Phaedrus in discussion of the speech he has read off. Instead he provides two speeches of his own, speeches that the dialogue presents as extensions of an *oral* tradition – "I have heard of some things (*tinōn akēkoa*) from the beautiful Sappho or the wise Anacreon or some prose writings or other" (235c) – but which, of course, Plato *writes* for us to read. And with that a remarkable tension and contradiction is introduced in Plato's account of writing, which I, in contrast to Derrida, would argue goes back to Plato's striking ambivalence, not in regard to writing, but in regard to the oral tradition.

For Plato views sophism as an outgrowth of that oral tradition, *particularly in its writings*, which he considers merely a notation for orality. On the one hand, to be sure, he would counter sophism's perversion of orality with Socratic oral dialectic, and to this extent, then, Derrida would seem to be right: to prevent seduction by the written word it must, in Plato's view, be brought back to live speaking. On the other hand, Plato is also a Pythagorean, and he sees in Pythagorean mathematics, in its theories of harmony, numbers, and geometrical forms, another, perhaps even more effective counter to sophism. For

the knowledge Pythagorean mathematicians have of their subject matter makes them immune to sophistical confutation. For instance, seeing and knowing, *eidenai*, what the area of a square is, its *ti estin*, and seeing and knowing what the area of a circle is, makes mathematicians immune to attempts to make it seem as if a square could be constructed equal to the area of a given circle. To one who sees and knows a thing mathematically, that thing cannot be passed off for what it is not.

Now, as opposed to Socrates' language, the language with which these Pythagoreans make their unconfutable demonstrations (*apodeixeis*) is not at all the language of orality, and, as Derrida himself rightly points out on another occasion, it is not even based in orality but rather in writing.[9] For instance, the voiced sound that one makes for "2" is entirely secondary to the written mark "2" and twice removed from the *eidos* or "look" of duality in the system of numbers that one sees and reads in the "writing in the soul." *Here the mark, the grammē, "2," is the sign most closely approximating the archetype, not the voiced "two."*

With that a problem is posed for Plato: How indeed might one best defeat sophism and, in particular, sophism in its best defended form of oral speech written down? With Socrates' oral dialectic of question and answer? Or should we, like Pythagorean mathematicians, be made immune to its distortions from the start by clear in*sight* into what it is that speech is about, by a clear vision, this is to say, of the *eidos* or "look" of the thing and its place in the diagrammatic system of differences and relations establishing what it combines with and what it does not? (For example, "2" combines with "Even" but not with "Odd," "Soul" with "Life" but not with "Death" [see *Phaedo* 104 a f.], and, presumably, "Love" with *"to kalon"* but not with *"to aischron."*) If "seeing and knowing" the "look" of things is the best defense against sophism, then *dialegesthai* as Socratic "talking" things "through" in time, must be transformed into the new *dialegesthai* of a spatialized and systematic "sorting" things "out", namely by the "bringing together" or *sunagōgē* of what is related, and the "taking apart" or *diairesis* of what is different. Dialectic as spoken dialogue must become the dia*gramm*ing that Plato refers to as the "writing in the soul" (*Phaedrus* 276 a, 278 a). Indeed, the possibility that Plato holds out, is that like *duas* or "two" the voiced phonemes, *dikaion, kalon, agathon*, which name the three principal topics of rhetorical persuasion, are really acoustical signs of mental insights into the "look" or *eidos* of each of these, *a "look" that is primarily signified not vocally at all but graphically, in "writing,"* which is to say, in some distribution of marks in space just as 2 has its *place* in the series of odd and even numbers, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and so forth.

And just why would recourse to this "good" writing shield us from the dangers of the "bad" writing that merely writes down oral speech? Because recourse to the "writing in the soul," to the diagrammatic system of the *eidē* in their differences and relations, would stabilize the meaning of words, which now would no longer be equivocal *onomata*, mere names for things, but henceforth univocal signs for what a thing is seen to be clearly and distinctly. With some one who has seen and knows (*oide*) the *eidos* or "look" of something that "2" signifies, Sophists have no chance to make "2" mean something it does not. The hope accordingly, is that the same univocity could be achieved for the

rhetorical topics of *to dikaion, to kalon*, and *to agathon* and that the signs desig-
nating these could thereby made invulnerable to sophistic word twisting. The
fact of the matter is that in the *Phaedrus* Plato shifts, albeit incompletely, from
taking the Socratic oral response to sophism to taking the Pythagorean written
one, and from Socratic dialectic as talking things through in time, to a math-
ematical or instructional (*mathematikē*) dialectic that sorts things out spatially
and diagrammatically. Indeed, directly contrary to Derrida, I would argue that
it is not the attack on writing that characterizes this dialogue but the attack on
orality: the only writing it attacks is the one that represents oral speech and
thereby aggravates the weaknesses of the latter.

The issue, joined at 258 d, is, after all, in just what *kalōs graphein*, as opposed
to *aischrōs te kai kakōs graphein*, consists, that is, writing in a noble way like
Lycurgus or Solon (compare *PPh*, 121–2 on the writing of law-givers), as
opposed to writing in a despicable and bad way. The answer is already given
away at 259 e: of both *legein te kai graphein*, speaking and writing, it is asked,
"Must it not hold for things stated well and nobly that the thought of the one
saying them has seen and known the truth [*dei tois eu ge kai kalōs rhēthēsomenois
tēn tou legontos dianoian eiduian t'alēthes*] of the things that he would speak
about?" The key words here are *dianoia*, namely "thought" or discursive intel-
lection, and *eiduia*, the participle of *eidenai* or to have "seen and known." For
already here the translation of the auditory into the visual is obvious; *dia-
legesthai* or talking something through in Socratic question and answer and
listening to the voice of one's partner in the discussion has given way to *dia-
noein*, sorting things through intellectually once having seen the truth of them.
In other words, writing nobly presupposes founding mere *appearances*, as these
are named in voiced speech, in what is seen to *be*; the vocal sounds we make and
write down for others to reinvoke for listeners, must be founded in an envision-
ing of what is statically ever present to the intellection (*nous*) envisioning it.
Even someone who would deceive the audience would, if the deception is to be
done "well," have to have seen and known the truth, for, "the one who has not
seen and known the truth [*ho tōn alētheian mē eidōs*], but instead chases after
beliefs in the apparent, will produce, so it seems, some sort of ridiculous art of
speaking that is no art at all" (262 c).

To make his point Plato now develops the hypothetical case of one who
would persuade his audience artfully and "well," if not "nobly," of something
that is not so, and he proceeds to test Lysias's speech to see if it is an example of
just such an artful deception founded in a vision of the truth or if it is not rather
an instance of the mere knack of producing nice sounding words about appear-
ances in complete ignorance of the truth. It emerges that Lysias has simply
written down what he has heard, namely an uncharted, undiagrammed acous-
tical flow of *onomata* or oral, audible word-names, in no logical sequence and
pieced together only loosely by "and" and "furthermore" or "on the other
hand." There is – and just this is the point – no envisionable structure to his
speech at all, rather it is phrased, solely for the sake of its sound, with the
rhetorical schemata of parallelism and antithesis. *In other words, it lacks the
sustasis or spatial composition of writing* (see 268 d). Thus it fails utterly when
measured against the standard Plato applies to it: "Every speech," he says,

"must be composed like a living being [*hōsper zōon sunestanai*], having a kind of body of its own so that it is neither without head nor foot, but has a middle and extremities that are *written* [*gegrammena*] so as to stand in proper relationship to each other and the whole" (264 c; my emphasis).

It follows that if a speech is to be written "well" and by a *technē* rather than by a mere knack, it must be founded in a spatial diagrammatization. The spoken words to be recited by the speaker and heard by an audience over a length of time must be based in a static structure envisionable in space, a diagram, say, of the species "brought together" in the genus madness and then "taken apart" into a "left" and "right" love (see 266 a–b). The spoken "speech" must be based, that is, in "the writing in the soul" which, being precisely "without voice [*aneu phōnēs*]" was never heard but was always seen and read silently (*Sophist* 263 e). Measured against this standard, Lysias, it emerges, merely perpetuates in what he has written down the oral-auditory tradition of rhetoric, which, like him, is concerned simply with the temporal duration (*mēkos*), be it long or short (see 267 b), and the temporal sequence of what the audience will hear, that is, first, the introduction, second, the narration, third, the certain proofs, fourth, the likelihoods (266 e), and last, a sort of *da capo* to "remind the listeners [*hupomn-ēsai epi teleutēs tous akouontas*]" of what they had heard before but might have forgotten since (267 e). (We note that the *hupomnēsis* or rememoration here is purely oral-aural and has nothing to do with writing!) Lysias is not in the least concerned with founding this acoustical temporal flow in a visual, spatial diagram. Hence, for him to claim that such a procedure as his is a *technē* or "art" would be the equivalent of Sophocles or Euripides claiming that their tragic *technē* consisted merely in knowing how to make very long speeches about a small matter and very short speeches about a great one (see 268 c–d). But, in fact, their entire *technē* consists in the positioning together, the *sustasis*, of the parts in a whole (268 d), and measured against this standard, Lysias and the tradition of rhetoric can be seen to have no art at all. Like all the writers of treatises on the so-called *rhetorikē technē* or rhetorical art, Lysias remains caught in the oral tradition and is incapable of the new visual *dialegesthai*, of "bringing together" parts dispersed over a space and then "taking them apart" again according to their "natural" divisions (see 266 a). He and they are incapable, that is, of organizing a whole that can be taken in at a glance (see 269 a–c).

Still, Plato, on the border, as he is, between the earlier oral tradition and the new literacy, and drawn, as he is, in the opposite directions of the Socratic oral, and the Pythagorean mathematical *logos*, is strikingly inconsistent about all this, and beginning at 274 c we now *read* what Plato has *written* about what Socrates has *heard* about writing. "*all'ha phēs akēkoenai, lege*," demands Phaedrus: "But tell what you say you have heard." And Plato's literary character Socrates then tells the tale heard, *hē akoē*, of Theuth and Thamus.

In regard to this tale we must note, to begin with, that, as opposed to Husserl, whom Derrida consistently reads into the *Phaedrus* (see *PPh*, 135, n. 61 and 166, n. 82), in Plato there is neither here nor anywhere else mention of some sort of primary internal experience of hearing one's own voice, of hearing oneself speak. Indeed, as *dianoia* or thinking something out, even the "dialogue of the soul with itself" is, as we have already noted, specifically said to be

without voice, *aneu phōnēs*. And with good reason, for far from being a two-voiced conversation – the word here is not *dua*logue but *dia*logue – this voiceless thinking consists in the new *dialegesthai*, which no longer "talks" things "through" time but "sorts" things "out" with the spatializing, visualizing *dialectikē technē* of "bringing things together" and "taking things apart" according to the "look" of them, their *eidos*. The *logos* of this *dialogos* is no longer Socratic speech but already the Pythagorean reasoning of graphic diagrammatical mathematics. And in the *Phaedrus*, too, the internal experience said to be invaded by the external *pharmakon* of written characters is never called oral-acoustical.

Furthermore, we must keep in mind that the injurious *pharmakon* of *hupomnēsis* condemned by Thamus, namely the use of prompts as reminders, is essentially an oral-auditory device (see above on the *hupomnēsai* at 267 e), and the use of written reminders of what to say, even complete texts, is to be taken only as an extension of other oral-auditory mnemonic devices such as meters, repetitions, stock phrases, and so forth (*PP*, 146–151). Hence when Plato contrasts *anamnēsis* with mere *hupomnēsis* here, he is not challenging writing as such but only the application of writing by an oral tradition. Indeed, as the *Meno*'s example of doubling the area of a square makes clear (82 b ff.), *anamnēsis* itself is grasped starting from the graphic and diagrammatic and not at all from the oral and auditory: *anamnēsis* is not at all the mind's recovery of something it has once *heard* but of something it has once *seen*. By *anamnēsis* one comes to see and know (*eidenai*) again the interrelations obtaining among the "looks" of things (*eidē*) arrayed for one's envisioning, in the case of the *Meno*, Double, Square, Diagonal, and so forth. (Compare the *Phaedrus* 249 c: "This, then is remembrance of those things which our soul once saw [*touto d'estin anamnēsis ekeinōn ha pot'eiden hēmon hē psychē . . .*].")[10]

<center>IV</center>

Where, then, does this leave us with regard to writing and Platonism's "metaphysical" reductions of otherness to presence to self, and of openness of meaning to closure and univocity? Is it writing, as Derrida contends, that subverts "right reasoning," *ho orthos logos*, and must therefore be suppressed and excluded in Plato? Or is it not rather precisely orality that Plato sees as the danger? Our study has made clear, I think, that in fact Plato sees the oral tradition, particularly in its potential for sophistical exploitation, as the real threat. But in what sense could the spoken word, far more than the written, be so radically disruptive that he would seek to counter it, at least in part, with recourse to writing?

First, and as I think Plato recognized, it is not the written word that invades one's self-presence and disrupts one's *autarkeia* or self-sufficiency but rather the spoken word. For the one who would read it, any given written word, be it written on some external surface or be it distributed diagrammatically in internal mental space, is, despite its deferring to other absent written words, in view and at the disposal of the reader, who, precisely as a reader or one looking on, can maintain a theoretical detachment not available to a listener. After all, readers can always look away from the text whenever they want, but listeners

cannot so easily escape hearing what is being said to them. Indeed, with Havelock I would argue that it is the displacement of orality by writing that makes the project of pure *theōria*, the pure intellect's sovereign contemplation of the timeless ideas possible in the first place; for as long as one remained a listener to tales being sung aloud, one remained captivated by them and drawn into the passions of the protagonists (*PP*, 197–214, 254–75). In this regard one need only compare the *Ion*, 533c–535a, for the critique of the rhapsodist, who, precisely because he sings what he has heard, *cannot* see and know what he is talking about.

Hence, if, with Heidegger and contrary to Plato, a *Destruktion* of presence to self is the goal, one might better advance an oral and not literary tradition. I have in mind here an oral tradition unknown to Plato, to be sure, but perhaps the one most disruptive of later Platonism, namely the Judeo-Christian tradition of the homiletic, pro-phetic word, the word "spoken forth." As an example one might take the "You are the one!" of *2 Samuel* 12:7, which Nathan attaches to his story of the rich man who stole from a poor man, and which invades and shatters David's detachment from the people with whose lives he had been scheming – visually schematizing, we might say – and draws him back into good faith. It is Kierkegaard, perhaps, who, in destroying the consummate Platonist Hegel, has best understood the existential need for converting such *scriptural* passages as this, that one might read silently, back into the *spoken* word that one hears and obeys. Or, as Luke has it, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear [*ho echōn ōta akouein akouetō*]," and "My mother and my brothers are those who hear God's word and do it [*hoi ton logon tou theou akouontes kai poiountes*]" (*Luke* 8:8, 21).

Second, the spoken word, as we have seen, is not static but temporary and temporal, and precisely this inconstancy makes it dangerous for the knowledge that Platonic metaphysics would secure. For if the stabilized truth that we *see* expressed and articulated diagrammatically were to be drawn back into expression in the mere voiced word that we *hear*, as this fades into audibility only to fade into inaudibility, it would be undermined and lost. What had seemed to be definitively clear and distinct for us, who could survey it and signify it, would revert to its ultimate impenetrability. It follows that if the *Destruktion* of Platonism is to be at the same time the recovery of the original openness and indecidability of meaning, the original *orality* beneath the layers of literary culture suppressing it must be restored. Not writing is the ramrod with which to breach the fortress of static "metaphysical" thought, rather orality.

Indeed, I would argue against Derrida that it is the spoken word, not the written, that is least susceptible to some sort of eidetic reduction, least susceptible of being reduced to a univocal sign designating some sort of static *eidos* and, hence, as Plato fully realized, that remains most open to shifts in meaning. For the spoken word, if it is not yet, for example, a conventional sign for the written sign "2," but still part of a premathematical, preliterate *voca*-bulary, is not a *sēmeion*, not a sign re-presenting something else, at all, but rather an *onoma* or name that in naming something lets it be temporarily and ambiguously what it is – as in Achilles, Achilleus, from *achos* and *laos*, that is, "grief to the people."[11] A written sign such as "2" signifies univocally a function in a system

of signs in the "writing in the soul," and other written signs such as *"to dikaion"* or what is "just," can give the appearance, at least, of analogously designating some sort of *eidos* univocally. But, as I think Plato recognized and feared, spoken names, *onomata*, which are heard, do not allow this sort of envisioning, rather they draw us into an event in which the meaning that they put to us is constantly becoming new and different.[12]

We see, then, that the graphic and diagrammatical systematization of differences and relations that Derrida calls *archē*-writing and that Plato calls the "writing in the soul" is in fact not an *archē* or originary principle prior to voiced speech and is not presupposed by voiced speech. Indeed, such a structural "grammar" is presupposed only once *onomata* have been converted into *sēmeia* and the temporal event of voiced audible speech has, in subsequent reflection, been stopped, spatialized, and envisioned. After all, grammars are not produced by native *speakers* and it was the Romans who first produced grammars of Greek. Derrida, in perpetuating optical metaphysics rather than taking it down, continues to presuppose the priority of written signification over vocal naming. But he got this wrong: Homer and the great speeches of his oral tale precede Pythagoras' demonstrations and Plato's new dialectical art, both of which are abstractions from our original acoustical involvement in being and time.

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6

ETHICS OF THE
NARRATIVE SELF

Richard Kearney

The very notion of selfhood is ostensibly challenged by postmodern declar-
ations of the "death of man." From Foucault's apocalyptic antihumanism in *The
Order of Things* to Derrida's pronouncements on the "end of man" in *Margins of
Philosophy*, we have grown increasingly accustomed to the claim that the
"human subject" is an epistemic construct of recent invention whose time has
come – and gone. If the self survives at all, it does so, we are told, in the
deconstructive guise of a rhetorical trope, desiring machine or effect of the
signifier. In our postmodern age, as Derrida reminds us, the human subject has
become a postman circulating postcards in an endless communications network
without sender and without addressee.

I

The best response to this crisis of self is not, I believe, to revive some substan-
tialist notion of the person as essence, *cogito*, or ego. Apolegetics is no answer,
and fails furthermore to acknowledge the legitimacy of many postmodern cri-
tiques of the substantialist self. A more appropriate strategy, I will argue, is to
be found in a hermeneutics of narrative which seeks to provide us with an
alternative model of self-identity. In this respect, the most fitting answer to the
question "who is the author or agent?" is (as Hannah Arendt reminds us) to *tell
the story of a life*. Why? Because the enduring identity of a person, presupposed
by the designation of a proper name, is provided by the narrative conviction
that it is the *same subject* who perdures through its diverse acts and words
between birth and death. The story told tells about the action of the "who": and
the identity of this "who" is a narrative identity. This identity is what Paul
Ricoeur, in *Time and Narrative*, terms an *ipse-self* in process rather than an *idem-
self* in fixity.[1]

The narrative subject involves an ongoing process of self-constancy and self-
rectification which requires imagination to synthesize the different horizons of
past, present, and future. This was something already recognized by Heidegger
in his hermeneutic reading of Kant's transcendental imagination in the *Kant-
buch* of 1929.[2] The narrative concept of self thus offers a dynamic notion of

identity (*ipse*) which includes mutability and change within the cohesion of one lifetime (what Dilthey referred to as the *Zusammenhand des Lebens*). This means, for instance, that the identity of human subjects is deemed a constant task of reinterpretation in the light of new and old stories we tell about ourselves. The subject becomes, to borrow a Proustian formula, both the reader and writer of its own life. Selfhood is a "cloth woven of stories told" (*TN*, 3: 246).[3]

The narrative model of self-identity has been developed by a number of contemporary thinkers, from Ricoeur and MacIntyre to Taylor and Benhabib. These thinkers develop the basic argument that Enlightenment models of the disembodied *cogito*, no less than traditional models of a substance-like self (*idem*), fail to appreciate the fundamental processes of *socialization* – processes through which a person acquires a self-identity capable of projecting a narrative into the world in which it is both an author *and* an actor.[4] Moreover, the narrative model of identity suggests that the age-old virtue of self-knowledge, first promoted by Socrates and Seneca, involves not some self-enclosed ego but a hermeneutically examined life "purged" of naïve archaisms and dogmatisms. The subject of self-knowledge is one clarified by the *cathartic* effect of narratives conveyed by culture. Self-constancy is the property of a subject instructed by the "figures" of a culture it has critically applied to itself (*TN*, 3: 247–9).[5]

This application of "other" cultural narratives to one's own narratives is a necessary critical moment in the hermeneutics of identity. Why? Because storytelling can also be a breeding ground of illusions, distortions, and ideological false consciousness. In configuring heterogeneous elements of our experience, narrative emplotment may serve as cover-up. Narrative concordance may mask discordance, the drive for order and unity displacing difference, happy endings concealing contradictions. Indeed, as Lyotard amongst others reminds us, even emancipatory narratives can degenerate into oppressive Grand Narratives, as we see in the Enlightenment, Marxism, or the great monotheistic religions. The question of power interests cannot therefore be divorced from the hermeneutic analysis of narrative. We are constantly in need of a "hermeneutics of suspicion" (inspired by Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche) to be applied to the deceptive proclivities of narrative. Here, we concur with Edward Said who observes in "Permission to Narrate" (1984), and again in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), that narratives frequently operate as representations of will-to-power: representations which must be challenged by "counter-narratives" in order that their abusive tendencies be exposed and, ideally, reversed.[6] But these so-called "counter-narratives," as Said recognizes, are themselves forms of narrative – alternative stories to the official story, emergent stories of marginal or truncated histories, indirect stories of irony and subversion. Such unofficial narratives brush history against the grain. They put dominant powers in question. One thinks here specifically of the work of postcolonial authors such as Toni Morrison, Achebe, Beckett, Rushdie, or Ben Jelloun.

A similar argument obtains at the level of *individual* identity. Here, the process of narrative critique takes the form of a cathartic clarification whereby the self comes to know itself by retelling itself. This may occur, for example, when a subject commits itself to working the bits and pieces of unintelligible or suppressed experience into a narrative in which it can acknowledge a certain

self-constancy through change. This model of analytic working-through (*Durch-arbeitung*) applies to both individual case histories and the collective stories of communities. For, just as psychoanalysis shows how the story of a personal life comes to be composed through a series of rectifications applied to preceding narratives, the history of a society proceeds from the critical corrections new historians bring to their predecessors' accounts (mythical and historio-graphical). Communities come to know themselves in the stories they tell about themselves. Take the classic case of biblical Israel: it is precisely in the perpetual recounting of its own foundational narratives (Genesis, Exodus, Kings etc.) that the historical community bearing its name is formed. Exemplifying the hermeneutic circle of narrative identity, Israel draws its self-image from the reinterpretation of those texts it has itself created. For com-munal identity, no less than for personal identity, stories proceed from stories.

To sum up my argument thus far, I would say that for narrative selfhood to be ethically responsible, it must ensure that self-constancy is always informed by self-questioning. This requires that narrative identity never forgets its origins in narrative imagination. A critical fluidity and openness pertains to narra-tive identity as long as we recognize that it is always something made and remade. Hence, a society which willingly reconstitutes itself through a correct-ive process of ongoing narrative is as impervious to self-righteousness as it is to self-negation. Any temptation to collective solipsism or fundamentalism is resisted by the imaginative tendency of narrative to freely vary worlds foreign to itself. At its best, narrative subjectivity remains open to the possibility of its own self-deconstruction. For sometimes it is when narrative splits itself into little narratives, sundered narratives, even antinarratives attesting the impossi-bility of grand narrative, that it remains most faithful to otherness. It is, moreover, this same propulsion of narrative beyond itself towards others that entails the corollary movement towards ethical *commitment*. Citing the well-known example of a subject's capacity to keep its promise over time, Ricoeur affirms that narrative identity is only equivalent to true self-constancy in the moment of *decision*: a moment which makes "ethical responsibility the highest factor in self-constancy" (*CI*, 249). Thus, to return to our example of biblical Israel, we might say that it is the Jewish community's ability to reimagine itself through its own narratives which provides it with *both* the coherent identity of an historical people *and* the ethical resource to imagine the narratives of others – for example, Palestinians – who oppose them. The call by Jewish thinkers like Martin Buber and Hannah Arendt for a binational Palestinian-Israeli state is a case in point. The ethical moment of *decision* might be seen, accordingly, as an expression of the Hebraic *constancy* of narrative memory – the memory of the age-old demand to liberate the imprisoned, to care for "the famished, the widowed, and the orphaned," to welcome the *stranger* as the *other-than-self*.

There is a hermeneutic circle here. But there are limits to this self-interpretation which prevent it degenerating into a vicious circle. First, there is the decision mentioned above which, though profoundly informed and galvan-ized by narrative, ultimately cuts across the narrative circuit of selfhood and stakes a claim for action as we move from text proper back to the life-world. Second, there is a moment of responsibility towards the *other* who, although

heard and witnessed via narratives, is nonetheless irreducible to these narratives in the final analysis.

Levinas describes this as the self's ethical obligation to the face of the other; while Lyotard and Adorno speak of this limit-marking alterity in terms of a willingness to surpass narrative in deference to the sublime. Either way, there is a recognition that narrative subjectivity may indeed have full poetic licence *within* the imaginary but encounters limits to its own free play when confronted with the irreducible otherness of the other. Narrative selfhood is ethical because it is answerable to something or someone *beyond* itself. So that even where it knows no censure (within the text), it knows responsibility (to the other who transcends the text).

In contradistinction to the postmodern paradigm of the postcard, a hermeneutics of narrative is always a case of *someone saying something to someone about something*. As such, it insists on a fundamentally intersubjective and relational dimension to discourse which escapes confinement to the "prisonhouse of language."

II

The idea that narrative is ethically vacuous is further belied by the *evaluative* dimension of narrative persuasion. Most narratives convey something of the Rilkean summons: "Change your life!" This phenomenon of persuasion has wide-ranging implications for our understanding of the rapport between ethics and poetics (for example, rhetoric, tropology, textual exegesis, reader reception). Narrative persuasion involves some element of ethical solicitation, however tacit or tangential.

To be clear on this: I am not talking here of a morality of rule, which would be antipathetic to poetic liberty. I support Ricoeur's maxim that "the imaginary knows no censorship" and repudiate the intrusion of moralizing dogmatism in to the free space of creativity. In my view, Rushdie had full poetic licence to imagine whatever he wanted in *The Satanic Verses*, as did Kazantzakis in *The Last Temptation of Christ* or the Marquis de Sade in *La philosophie du boudoir*. What I am talking about here is not a moralism of abstract rules but an ethics of experience (concerned with cultural paradigms of suffering and action, happiness and dignity). As Aristotle was the first to acknowledge, poetics teaches us essential truths about human experience (unlike history which is confined to particular facts); and these essential truths are intimately related to the pursuit of possibilities of happiness or unhappiness – that is, the desire for the good life guided by practical wisdom (*phronēsis*). The fictional narrator presents us with a variety of ethical possibilities which the reader is then free to choose from, discarding some, embracing and even realizing others. The narrator proposes; the reader disposes. But the pact of trust and free exchange struck by narrator and reader always carries some *evaluative* charge. "The strategy of persuasion undertaken by the narrator," writes Ricoeur,

> is aimed at giving the reader a vision of the world that is never ethically
> neutral, but that rather implicitly or explicitly induces a new evaluation

of the world and of the reader as well. In this sense, narrative already belongs to the ethical field in virtue of its claim – inseparable from its narration – to ethical justice. Still it belongs to the reader, now an agent, an initiator of *action*, to choose among the multiple proposals of ethical justice brought forth by the reading.   (*TN*, 3: 249)

A further word on this: it is because ethical *phronēsis* implies just thinking and a desire for the good that Aristotle considers it has a significant role in poetic *mimēsis*. There is no "imitation of an action" which does not give rise to approbation or reprobation relative to a scale of goodness. And so we may ask what would remain of the cathartic pity and fear that Aristotle taught us to link to unmerited misfortune, "if aesthetic pleasure were to be totally dissociated from any sympathy or antipathy for the character's ethical quality" (*TN*, 1: 59). Even when narrative fiction subverts the established system of virtue – as is, happily, often the case – it is still engaged, however implicitly, in a process of evaluation: "Poetics does not stop borrowing from ethics, even when it advocates the suspension of all ethical judgment or its ironic inversion. The very project of ethical neutrality presupposes the original ethical quality of action" (*TN*, 1: 59). We may say then that poetic narratives not only excite emotions of pity and fear, they also *teach* us something about happiness and unhappiness – that is, the good life. And what we learn in the narrative "imitation of action" we may be inclined to incorporate in our return journey from text to action. This combination of emotion and learning in fiction is what prompts Ricoeur to identify narrative understanding with phronetic understanding. In a study entitled "Life in Quest of Narrative," he writes:

> Aristotle did not hesitate to say that every well-told story *teaches* us something; moreover, he said that the story reveals universal aspects of the human condition and that, in this respect, poetry was more philosophical than history, which is too dependent on the anecdotal aspect of life. Whatever may be said about this relation between poetry and history, it is certain that tragedy, epic and comedy, to cite only those genres known to Aristotle, develop a sort of understanding that can be termed *narrative understanding* and which is much closer to the practical wisdom of moral judgment than to science, or more generally, to the theoretical use of reason.[7]

The validity of this observation can be seen in the simple fact that while ethics often speaks generally of the relation between virtue and the pursuit of happiness, fiction fleshes it out with *experiential* images and examples – that is, with particular stories. To understand what courage means, we tell the story of Achilles; to understand what wisdom means, we tell the story of Socrates, and to understand what *caritas* means, we tell the story of Francis of Assisi:

> It is the function of poetry in its narrative and dramatic form, to propose to the imagination and to its mediation various figures that constitute so many *thought experiments* by which we learn to link together the ethical

aspects of human conduct and happiness and misfortune. By means of poetry, we learn how reversals of fortune result from this or that conduct, as this is constructed by the plot in the narrative. It is due to the familiarity we have with the types of plot received from our culture that we learn to relate virtues, or rather forms of excellence, with happiness or unhappiness.   (*OPR*, 22–3)[8]

These "lessons" of narrative constitute the "universals" of which Aristotle spoke; but they are universals of a more approximate (and particular-sensitive) kind than those of theoretical thought. We may speak of narrative understanding then, in the sense Aristotle gave to *phronēsis*, by contrast with the abstract logic of pure *theōria*.

III

We might summarize the relation between narrative identity and ethical *phronēsis* sketched above under three basic headings: (1) *vision*, (2) *initiative*, and (3) *empathy*.

(1) Narrative plays a pivotal role in providing us with ethical vision in that it enables the self to *see* essential connections between its actions and its ends qua good and evil. So that if it is true – as Ricoeur emphasizes in his chapters on "Narrative Identity" in *Oneself as Another* – that fiction serves as an "immense laboratory" for experimenting with an "endless number of imaginative variations," these experiments are also "explorations in the realm of good and evil" (*OA*, 159, 164). Ethical judgment is not abolished in fiction; it is opened up to increasingly extended horizons of vision. Or to put it another way, narrative invites ethical judgment to submit itself to the imaginative variations proper to fiction (*OA*, 164). And this expansion of ethical vision exceeds the conventional moralities of rule and duty.

(2) Narrative also serves ethical *initiative*. For the self to *see* its being-in-the-world in terms of larger possibilities of vision often empowers it to *undertake* action, that is, to better identify its goals and motives and so inaugurate a new beginning: "with the help of narrative beginnings which our reading has made familiar to us . . . we stabilize the real beginnings formed by the initiatives we take. . . . Literature helps us in a sense to fix the outline of these provisional ends" (*OA*, 162). In other words, the more the self learns about narrative emplotment in fiction, the more the self learns about how to plot its own life (that is, how to combine and configure the heterogeneous elements of its temporality and identity). Because literary fiction enables each self to better perceive the connection between agent, action, and goal in its most concentrated form, it prepares each of us to become better readers and authors of our own lives (*OA*, 159). This involves a certain schematization of the network of goals and means whereby we are free to try out various courses of action and play with practical possibilities. Moreover, we can say that this projective function of narrative actually *generates* action by furnishing us with a clearing in which "motives may be compared and measured, even if they are as heterogeneous as desires and ethical commands." It is, then, ultimately in the liberty of narrative

imagination that I am most at liberty to test my strengths and evaluate my ethical capabilities.[9]

This emancipation of ethical initiative applies, once more, not only to the individual self but to history in the larger sense. Ethical intervention in history occurs in that moment of initiative "when the weight of history that has already been made is deposited, suspended, and interrupted and when the dream of history yet to be made is transposed into a responsible decision" (*TN*, 3: 208 ff., 258, 370).[10] In this way, the power of initiative proposed by narrative selfhood synthesizes our dual commitment to the historical horizons of past and future, tradition and expectations, ideology and utopia.

(3) Finally, narrative serves ethical *phronēsis* in its power to *empathize*. In addition to its capacity to envision a new project, evaluate its motivations, and initiate a realistic course of action, narrative enables each self to *identify* with others. Narrative provides selves with an "intersubjectivity of freedom" without which they would not be inclined to commit themselves to other persons. There is neither love nor hate, care nor concern, without an "imaginary transfer of my 'here' into another's 'there'" (*TA*, 227).[11] Or, as the homicidal narrator of John Banville's novel, *The Book of Evidence*, confesses: "I never imagined her sufficiently . . . yes, that failure of imagination is my real crime, the one that made all the others possible. . . . I could kill her because for me she was not alive."

This last point challenges, I believe, a certain postmodern assumption that poetics can have no truck with ethics. Such an assumption sometimes issues in an aesthetic of "deliberate irresponsibility" as has been said of Foucault, or in one of undecidable "indifference" as has been suggested of Derrida.[12] But whatever about the fairness of these charges, they do betray a lingering anxiety that postmodern poetics, left to itself, can sometimes be a rather feckless game.

What I am claiming here is that the model of narrative identity provides us with *both* a poetics *and* an ethics of responsibility in that it propels us beyond self-reference to a relation with others (via analogy/empathy/apperception). This extension of the circle of selfhood involves an "enlarged mentality" capable of imaging the self in the place of the other. Hannah Arendt considers this mentality to be essential to genuine ethical judgment; and I believe Arendt is right. "The power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others," she writes, echoing Kant's Third Critique,

> and the thinking process which is active in judging something is not, like the thought process of pure reasoning, a dialogue between me and myself, but finds itself always . . . in an anticipated communication with others with whom I know I must finally come to some agreement. From this potential agreement judgment derives its specific validity. . . . It needs the special presence of others "in whose place" it must think, whose perspectives it must take into consideration, and without whom it never had the opportunity to operate at all.[13]

This argument finds support in Proust's claim that literary narrative is the form of human relation nearest to genuine altruism. A claim reiterated by Martha

Nussbaum in *Love's Knowledge* when she argues for an ethic of imaginative perception inspired by art:

> When we examine our own lives, we have so many obstacles to correct vision, so many motives to blindness and stupidity. The "vulgar heat" of jealousy and personal interest comes between us and the living perception of each particular. A novel, just because it is not our life, places us in a moral position that is favourable for perception and its shows us what it would be like to take up that position in life. We find here love without possessiveness, attention without bias, involvement without panic.[14]

The point, once again, is not to conflate art and life, imagination and reality, text and action, self and other, but to see how, guarding their distinctive character, they can interweave and complement each other. I am not arguing that poetics and ethics are the *same*, only that they can, at propitious moments, be mutually supplementary. Poetic narrative can make us freer in ourselves at the same time as it solicits our moral empathy with others.

Let me sum up then: the "representative" mode of identity – where I represent myself as another – may serve to liberate the self from narcissistic interests without being a liquidation of its singular identity: "The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while I am pondering a given issue, and the better I can imagine how I would think and feel if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking" (*BPF*, 221). Ethical judgment, it appears, entails a basic act of sympathy whereby the self flows from itself towards the other in a free variation of imagination. Qua dialogue which opens us to foreign worlds – enabling the self to tell and listen to other stories – narrative functions as precondition for the "representative" subject. It transfigures the self-regarding self into a self-for-another, the *moi* into a *soi.*

I submit therefore that – current pronouncements on the end of narrative notwithstanding – our postmodern society of spectacle and simulation has more need than ever of narrative models of identity. Without them, we would lack the power to transform our self-identity into an ethical mode of selfhood. Narrative is not, I grant, always on the side of the angels. But as I hope to have shown it *does* possess a singular capacity to commit us to a dimension of otherness beyond the self – a commitment which, in the moment of decision, invites the self to imagine itself as another and to imagine the other as other. Were we devoid of such narrative imagining we would be devoid not only of poetic freedom but also, in the long run, of ethical judgment. That is why I ultimately hold that the "good life" is a life *recounted* (*OPR*, 31).[15]

POETRY, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE SPIRIT OF HISTORY

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INTRODUCTION

Massimo Verdicchio

The essays in this section raise each in its own way the issue of the legitimacy of reading poetic and literary texts philosophically. In reading Beckett, Hölderlin, and Rilke, the essays attempt to frame the literary text within a philosophical paradigm, to test it philosophically or to demonstrate its philosophical worthiness. We move from a reading where the philosophical provides the theoretical basis for understanding the literary (Barker), to a radical positioning where the literary is excluded in favor of a strictly philosophical reading (Feldman), to an example of philosophical influence that determines the poetical through history (Detsch).

In Stephen Barker's "Woburn On My Mind and In My (Mind's) Eye: Beckett's *Poiēsis*," literature becomes the illustration for the philosophical or theoretical. Beckett's radio play *Cascando* figures in Barker's reading as the best example of a paramodern text that illustrates contemporary theories of discourse from Guy Debord to Derrida and Lacan who have problematized, each in their own way, the phenomenon of the paramodern. In *Cascando*, as in any paramodern text, the figurative space where visibility becomes visible, there is a virtual space that can be variously defined as *béance*, a yawning gap as viewed by Debord; the locus of a trace as in Derrida; the *angst* generating phobia in Lacan; or finally as uncanny, *unheimlich*, the ubiquitous occultation of the subject, as postulated by Freud, as that which ought to remain concealed but is revealed. *Cascando*, or its central character Woburn, allegorizes the rift between the modernist position of the subject and the paramodern subversion, the discrepancy between visibility and framing, between representation and form. In so doing it questions the hegemonic codes of the subject or what in Beckett is a "quasi-subjective positionality," and ultimately the very ground on which the subject is encoded. Barker's reading of *Cascando* serves to illustrate the type of narrative occlusion characteristic of paramodern art. The text "re-enacts the uncanny absence of the subject and the rhetorical transformation in re-presentation." Its narrative is an "enabling *unheimlich* that denies and confirms, deposits, and erases."

Karen Feldman's "The Naming of the Hymn: Heidegger and Hölderlin" follows closely on Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin which excludes the possibility of a literary or external reading of the poem in favor of a nonmetaphysical philosophical reading. Hölderlin's poetry "stands apart as something unusual, a poetic saying or telling that does not use a sensuous image to point to a spiritual meaning." His poetry is not "about" something and does not

symbolize, it stands outside both metaphysics and Western art. "Der Ister" is not about a river, rather it is a naming that stands for poetic telling. Naming names the "what is" which is something other than meaning but calls "what is named" into being. It is a telling that *is* and not "about" something. The "what" that is told in the hymn and the "how" of its telling are one. "The hymn is the locus for poetic telling, for the unity of the naming and what is named."
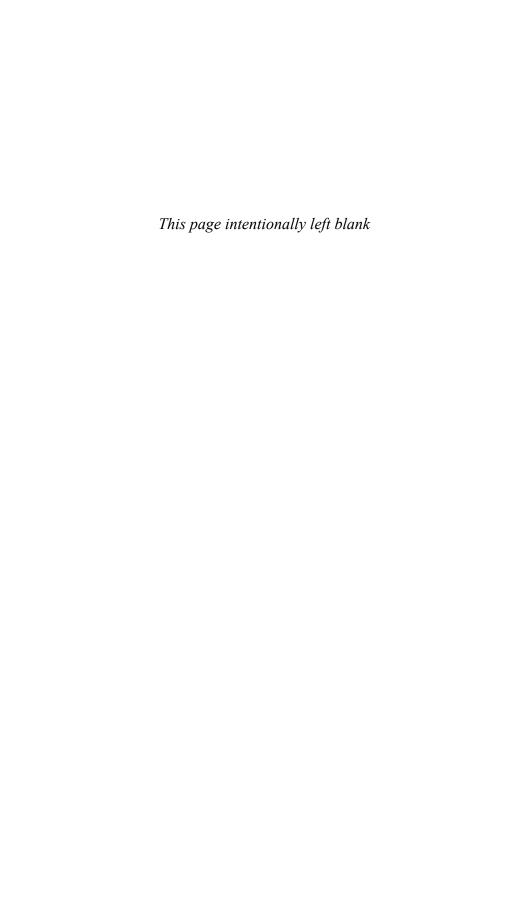
Feldman not only reproposes Heidegger's reading, but also suggests that Heidegger's "what might be said" that he hears in the word of the poet, can be read as the *possibility* that the poem, indeed, *is* "the journeying and locality, it is the poetic time of *Unheimlichkeit* and *Heimat*." Feldman also recognizes that what Heidegger claims to observe in Hölderlin's poetry is actually his own naming. "It is Heidegger himself who names the river 'journeying,' and thereby names this determination of coming to be at home." But for Feldman this naming is "perhaps not" the word of philosophy derived from a metaphysical distinction since naming *is* nothing other than what is named. Heidegger's word as intimating something other is not "about" something else, "is" not a point of access to some entity, rather, it *poetizes* its own essence. It provides an access to being through a poetic telling *of* it. For Feldman, the "is" of Heidegger's lectures on Hölderlin opens the *possibility* of a different kind of thinking not only of river and journey but also of the "*is*" and of being. This possibility of thinking, however, does not constitute a content to be discovered by an exterior, interpretive reader; "for this thinking *is* not but nevertheless might be."

In "On Transvaluing History: Rilke and Nietzsche," Richard Detsch does not focus on a single work by Rilke but discusses the common conception of history shared by the poet and Nietzsche, as well as the influence the latter may have had on the former. The main connection is Nietzsche's notion of the "historical" which, as Detsch explains, is paradoxically "unhistorical" since history concerns historical people only insofar as it serves their life goals. When this is no longer the case, truly historical people have to forget the past and seize the moment joyously and fearlessly. Or better yet, for truly historical people there is no need to forget since they are able to incorporate the past and transform it "as if into their own blood." This is the central notion that brings together Nietzsche and Rilke. In Rilke it entails keeping the spirit of the past alive in the present; in Nietzsche it characterizes the task of the overman who forces "being, permanence on a reality that is supremely and absurdly impermanent." This view of history, which is constant throughout Rilke's work and life, ultimately justifies Rilke's admiration for Mussolini and Italian Fascism, as well as Nietzsche's praise of the new Italian spirit under Fascism. For Detsch, such an admiration is not the result of Rilke's sickness late in life, but yet another instance of his belief in the transvaluation of history. Rilke believed that Italian Fascism incorporated and made visible the spirit of the old glory of Rome into the present, a spirit he had hoped would bring Rome and Europe back to the times of Augustus and the first Roman Empire.

These three readings raise the issue of the interpretation of literature and of whether philosophy is capable of reading and comprehending literature and to posit itself with respect to the referential claims the literary work inevitably makes. At first the analyses seem to show that a decidedly philosophical

approach allows us to make sense of the literary. Whether in the form of influence, in Detsch, or of a theoretical apparatus in Barker, philosophy seems to hold the key to explaining and making sense of the literary. This view seems confirmed in Feldman who reproposes Heidegger's nonliterary and nonmeta-physical reading of Hölderlin by completely doing away with the literary. In the last instance, neither a literary nor a philosophical reading is shown to yield results.

The status of thinking between philosophy and poetry reveals itself to *be* problematic. While thinking seeks refuge in the scientific certainty of the philosophical, and achieves apparent closure in an interplay of occlusion and visibility, it runs aground with a more rhetorically aware reading. Even Feldman's essay whose account seems to follow Heidegger's nonliterary reading approvingly places the validity of such reading into question when she suggests that his reading is "perhaps not" nonmetaphysical. This turn of events would seem to cast doubts on the ability of a strictly philosophical thinking to read and comprehend the literary. At the same time a literary or poetic thinking also does not seem to provide the answer. This leaves the "between" which, however, is outside the scope of these three essays.

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WOBURN ON MY MIND AND IN MY (MIND'S) EYE

BECKETT'S *POIĒSIS*

Stephen Barker

In his elliptical fiction, just as in his theater writings, Samuel Beckett conceals and reveals, frequently simultaneously, through strategies of revelation and concealment over which he maintains a strict if elusive control. His writing of lessness, and its manifestations in the obscurity-through-repetition at which he is such a master, is a key strategy for the (always-problematic) release of information and the building of a vertiginous sense of suspension in the reader. Beckett's obsessive concern with the *poiēsis* enacted by the elusory *voix de raconteur*, directly in his prose narratives and indirectly in his dramatic writing, foregrounds his fascination with and exploration of the agency and the action of narrative itself. Whatever story Beckett's prose may be telling, occluded within it is invariably a nexus of poetic theory, a theory of *poiēsis* itself, emanated through the discourse, at play at the liminal extremities of meaning, value, and communication. This play at the edge of narrative character is typified by the character of Woburn, who occupies the central characterological place in Beckett's *Cascando*. Since Woburn typifies the Beckettian strategy of occlusion of character, exploring and working to identify Beckett's narration of Woburn's story will serve here as a catalyst for an exploration of Beckett's more general strategy of characterological projection and concealment, and for the allegorical presence of Beckett's highly liminative art.

I THE THEORETICAL OCCLUSION

Beckett understands consummately and is the master orchestrator of the relationships between levels and kinds of dialectical positionalities in which indirection and calculated imprecision reign. He shows, in his treatment of Woburn and other characters, that he understands with rare power and nuance the schism and the attraction between the modernist notion of the subject position and its paramodern subversion, its interrogative and parodic underside. On a larger scale, his paramodern fiction, poetry, and drama

characteristically directly interrogate the vital relationship between visibility itself, in the idea of image-making, and its active framing, in the form of the actual image construction through which his stories build. *Poiēsis*, seen by Beckett as the problematic power to make or to produce narrative and focus agency, is for Beckett both a highly refined strategy and a production of problematic images. Beckett's dialectic of visibility and *poiēsis*, of voice and narrative, so endemic to his work in general, is a focal point for and index of the paramodern because, *mutatis mutandis*, it is also the quintessential nexus of modernist narrative. The works of paramodern artists such as Beckett, or like Peter Handke, Heiner Müller, Nathalie Saurraute, and, from a different perspective, Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer, and others, actively interrogate the hegemonic codes of the subject position, or what in Beckett should be called a quasi-subjective positionality, at the same time that the work interrogates the very ground for those encodings, by which narrative presents and re-presents itself, making both visibility as image association and *poiēsis* as narrative expression subject to layered strategies of discursive framing, (de)positing and working within a radically reconstructed locus for a possible narrative subject. That is to say: visibility, which with its partner the subject-position is the core of the modernist project both literally and figuratively, is itself however only visible within the larger theoretical framework of *poiēsis*: what is not cognized and recognized, expressed and therefore framed by expression is not, within an aesthetic context, visible as such; the "seen" is, by the time it is recognized as seen and is thus visible, a double narrative of framework and declaration, of context and, as it were, content. Indeed, we must work hard to narrate what we would actually "see," through all of our senses, because what we see is a function of the story we would tell about it, inadvertently, a story whose language occupies the entire broad and spectrum of semiotics, not merely the syntactic language through which we generally imagine expression to function. Our cultural naïveté with regard to this paramodern (and in the sense in which I invoke it now, poststructuralist) phenomenon – indeed its willful denial – has now, at least since Nietzsche, begun to dissipate; the apparently substantiating voice that traditionally declares and attests to its presence (and in this discussion "presence" again means "invisible" in the first-level mode by which modernism identifies itself), as the culmination of an aesthetic and psychological paradigm familiar to us since the Renaissance and that finds its roots in Aristotle, reveals itself in the paramodern as the voice of the chimerical double, the veritable ghost of paramodern liminality. For Beckett as for other paramodern writers and artists, this is a virtual place, the figurative space of visibility is appearance (what Guy Debord refers to as the *béance*, the yawning gap). It has become a recognized paramodern metaphor in the guise of the trace, the virtual space of paramodern narrative operation which finds its expression in the expression of the *béance*, by which it recognizes itself.

Debord's *béance*, the paramodern gap, which is at once the appearance of the objectified world and its occlusion, marks the hegemonic presence/absence play of "the exile of human powers into a beyond; separation perfected."[1] Where images are looked at twice, the second time placed within the framework of the theatrical and theoretical spectacle, the expressible narrative of the visible relies

on the absence (that is, the trace of the presence) of the apocryphal originary image, whose nominal immediacy is powerless, and whose role has become that of catalyst. The radical, occluding distancing of the *béance* is thus the acknowledgment of the "post"-modern, and indeed this is the only truly valid use of this often mistaken term. Modernist locators for the "experience" of art (artist/experiencer in a binary operation under the signs of "hereness" and "thereness," the artist "here," the artwork and the experiencer "there," where even "there" is understood as being substantial, that is, "here" somewhere else) loosen and give way in the paramodern, however, as modernist fixity has ceased to be a finite and locatable set of sites, particularly of the artist is ego as vision, and has become an open set of citations in an unfixed and apocryphal informationscape which constructs "artist," "artwork," and "experiencer" as traces of the agents or agencies to which they seem to refer. The expressible is for Debord the mark of the (narrative as much as societal) spectacle,

> the heir of all the weaknesses of the Western philosophical project which was to understand activity, dominated by the categories of seeing; indeed, it is based on the incessant deployment of the precise technical rationality which grew out of this thought. It does not realize philosophy, it philosophizes reality. It is the concrete life of all which is degraded into a spectaculative universe. (*SdS*, 19)

For Debord, then, the notion of reality is reversed in the paramodern, inverted in its relationship with the position of the creative subject, and this is its "logic." This produces, for Debord, Beckett, and the paramodern, a reinscribed mechanics of perception and expression which enforce and manifest the inversion of reality, producing what Robert Con Davis calls:

> the theatrically distinct opposition between presence and absence, the condition of difference in a binary system that makes a sign (and semiotics) possible. That is, what stands apart from and yet represents a semiotic difference is the possibility of representation itself, the signifying possibility. . . . [that] exacts a human cost in that the subject of language is signified within and, simultaneously, is alienated from language.[2]

Strictly speaking, the "language" to which Davis refers is the "signifying possibility," that is, semiosis "itself," in both of its guises, not merely either linear or alphabetic language, but the expressive possibility of representation *per se* and the *poiēsis* by which it is manifested forth. This set of phenomena can, of course, be seen as the alienation and deferral by which the poststructuralist project has always been defined; it has evolved through a wide variety of aesthetic and theoretical forms much discussed since the late 1960s; in terms of its relation to the paramodern, a useful description of the paramodern phenomenon is to be found in Lacan's (and many others') discourse of the Other, lying outside self-reflexivity (though not outside stories about self-reflexivity), the "'discursive law' against which conscious discourse never transgresses, but which always produces in its afterglow the anxiety by which we remember at

least the effect of the prior discourse without inhabiting or even accessing it" (*LaN*, 852). Though my focus here is not on the unconscious and its discourses, which bears a fascinating and complex relation to the *béance* and Beckett, it is significant in this occluding separation and the resultant anxiety it produces and expresses, famously in Freud's "scene of writing" and what Lacan calls "narrative theory."

In the paramodern as in modernism this action produces anxiety: in the gap between the absent presence of the visible and the present absence of the expressible can be detected the means of production of this angst: the expressive paramodern, as the trace, is the dangerous, all-too-familiar threat of reconstructed narrative loci for the narrative subject to which Lacan refers in his discussion of phobia which, unlike for Freud is for Lacan

> not the fear of an object, but the confrontation of the subject with an absence of object, with a lack of being in which he is stuck or caught, in which he loses himself and to which anything is preferable, even the forging of that most strange and alien of objects: a phobia.[3]

The threat (from the modernist perspective) of nonbeing, lodged at the core of the paramodern as it is at the core of modernism, is central to the parodic strategies of the paramodern, as the play of the trace institutes an interrogation of the lack of presence, and thus also of absence, as such, in paramodern narration. The result is a ubiquitous occultation of the subject position (*SLP*, 83) to a "not-there-ness" inhabiting the very notion of voice in the paramodern, showing "voice," that most *heimlich* of traits in the modernist sense, to be dramatically *unheimlich*, with all of its implicit and explicit "morbid [and dreadful] overtones."[4] Paramodern narrative is indeed *unheimlich* narrative. The constitutive "not-there-ness" of the voice,[5] more radical than an occlusion or occultation because the hidden is not merely unrevealed but indeed not there, is central to the paramodern precisely because of its *unheimlichkeit*. Thus emerges the notion of the uncanny as the gap; the *béance*, as Tony Kubiak points out, "becomes spectacular, becomes the phobic object which hides the terror of non-being, the terror of the chaos behind the harmony of the law, the deep and resolute void"[6] of ontological *unheimlichkeit* in and of the paramodern.

It remains to be seen, then, how the paramodern *unheimlich*, the "terror of the chaos behind the harmony of the law," relates to Freud's. The *unheimlich* is not itself morbid nor pessimistic, but produces these effects in the psyche through its dialectical engagement with the *unheimlich* (as the simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar) in the Other. Semiotics and its constitutive gap in the paramodern produce the occultation of the power of the Gaze of the Other; the Other becomes Other as it is expressed as such. As Derrida points out,[7] the *unheimlich* (as that which should have remained concealed but is revealed) is the suspended sign of the concealed, suspended like Nietzsche's tightrope in narrative – in order to draw attention to its existence as a mark. Thus is the *unheimlich*, the ground of the cultural horror that ranges from Aristotelian tragedy (as the enculturated evolution of the ritual dithyrambs out of which the Greek notion of the tragic emerged), at one end of the cultural spectrum, to

terrorism and *béance* – the occultation of the spectacle – at the other.[8] The paramodern *unheimlich* is thus a dialectical narrative construct, a linguistic subset of the experiential and linguistic *heimlich* by and against which it "knows" and defines itself, through a process of figuratively internal distancing.[9] In "Freud and the Scene of Writing," Derrida points out the "moments of deferring," the "traces," which are in Freud, following on some themes he develops extensively in a variety of texts dealing with the relation of the forces at work within the individual relative to those of the collective of which each is by default a part, "the effort of life to protect itself by deferring a dangerous cathexis, that is, by constituting a reserve [*Vorrat*]. The threatening expenditure of presence is deferred with the help of breaching [*Bahnung*; opening, clearing, forcing] or repetition."[10] The deferral to which Derrida refers, now so familiar to readers of and after deconstruction's lessons, is a distancing at a wide variety of aesthetic levels, in addition to its psychological and social components. Further, this psychoanalytic difference, Freud's "reserve," is matched by the thematic of literary/aesthetic distance in the paramodern works of Beckett and others, that focus on, depict, indeed are obsessed by, this "fading," "disappearance," occultation.

The *unheimlich*, as the frightful and energizing play of presence and absence, of the familiar and the unfamiliar, with all of its Manichean overtones, is thus vital to the paramodern occlusion of which Beckett is the master and clearest articulation. In Beckett's aesthetic context, the most dramatic consequence of this occlusion at the level of expression occurs at the level of the image itself: occultation is pervasive in this realm, as no "originary" image exists for consciousness; the space of the seemingly originary image, the stimulus to perception and thus to conception and aesthetic consideration, is *ipso facto* subsumed into the discursive image or rejected and discarded. Thus the "history" of the visible is already the play of concealment and revelation. Let me put this into two separate frameworks, Debord's sociological and Derrida's theoretical one. For Debord, "the image has become the final form commodity reification. . . . the spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image" (*SdS*, 30). The economy of the absent image, for Debord, works in this way:

> the more [the spectator] contemplates, the less he lives; the more he accepts recognizing himself in the dominant image of need, the less he understands his own existence and his own desires. The externality of the spectacle in relation to the active man appears in that his own gestures are no longer his but those of another who represents them to him. This is why the spectator does not feel at home anywhere, because the spectacle is everywhere. (*SdS*, 30)

For Debord, wherever the paramodern spectacle exists (and the conundrum of the paramodern is that the spectacle exists wherever attention is turned), the commodification of the image is the source of the *unheimlich*, the alienation-recognition conundrum.

Derrida, on the other hand, follows a labyrinthine path from the nonscripted proto-emiosis of the *unheimlich* trace in Freud, through the prewriting of the

arch-trace, via the symbiosis of memory traces and the mechanical constructs of semiosis, to the fact that the "psyche is indeed a kind of text" (*WD*, 199), and finally to the need, in defining and depicting the psyche through memory, to the "structure and functioning of writing" itself. This process never allows us to forget that life is "threatened by the origin of the memory which constitutes it, and by the breaching [Debord's *béance*] which it resists, the effraction which it can contain *only by repeating it*" (*WD*, 202; my emphasis). Acknowledgment of this breaching – the loss of the originary image within the framework of the expressive, that has as its equivalent the origin of pain (and of the object-fear by which phobia is defined) in Freud – provides the uncanny opening of the framework of the discursive trace in Derrida.

To comprehend the hegemonic danger of this strategic move, the *unheimlich* proliferation of paramodern discursive frames, one must confront and add to the Derridean alchemy (that is already in many respects a cousin-German to Lacan's) the Lacanian notion of *aphanisis*, as Lacan lays it out in *Four Fundamental Concepts*.[11] *Aphanisis* (fading or disappearing) and "epiphany" (as emergence or revelation) play a precipitous ontological and dialectical game, according to Lacan, within the realm of the expressibility of the mark of the subject. *Aphanisis*, the "fading of the subject," is inherent within the Freudian *unheimlich* and expresses itself as the condition of loss or disappearance of the "real" (paramodern) nature of the subject. The "dramaturgy of the subject" inherent in *aphanisis*, Lacan says, is a construct that produces the ontological fault line on which the *unheimlich* and the paramodern rest. This "revolution of the subject's status, and the resultant shift in the way we understand narration, poses an ontological difficulty of the highest order" (*LaN*, 858). Narrative *poiēsis* lies within the "irretrievably unwhole" (*LaN*, 857) nature of the subject (no wonder men fought to invent a "patriarchy" and no wonder women are struggling against it). In the fading of the subject, associated with the desire of and through the Other, this *aphanisis* can be seen as a threshold of the power of the law of the unconscious, and the cornucopic birth of *poiēsis*. Indeed, Lacan's concept of narration and interpretation rest squarely on this ontological fault line, and only by the strategic "suturing" of this unwholeness with "threads of ideology" (*LaN*, 857) can we occlude or conceal, behind a psychological and ideological mask (that is, framework) we must ourselves construct and bring to any treatment of any subject in any narrative with the hopeful expectation of producing, critiquing, or obviating significance, meaning, and wholeness, the *béance* on which the paramodern rests.[12]

II THE CRITICAL OCCLUSION

Having suggested a theoretical framework – and remembering what expressive frameworks entail in terms of the *unheimlich* and *aphanisis* – I want to exercise the critical agency that framework produces, here acknowledging the occlusion by which critical narratives operate. I know of no better examples of the paramodern occlusion I have been discussing than Samuel Beckett's short, 1962 radio play *Cascando*,[13] which seems at first to attempt the impossible fusion of narrative and voice, but which confesses a complete *aphanisis* of narrative and voice.

Indeed, as is appropriate for the paramodern as read by Debord, Derrida, and Lacan, both views are defensible and correct. Beckett's title, *Cascando*, itself a musical term for the fading away of sound,[14] is the first powerful hint at the complex and *unheimlich* theme I have been exploring. The piece itself, which requires about fifteen minutes to perform, has three so-called characters: the "Opener," "Voice," and "Music"; the "Opener" allows, with his, her, or its (we don't and can't know) – with "his" (let's say; the part was originally played, in the French ORTF production in 1963, by Roger Blin) first words, the verbal, or at least aural, action to begin and continue (though he is full of anxiety about its ability to do so); the "Voice" tries, increasingly unsuccessfully, to tell the story of an absent figure named Woburn; "Music" is music, which intercedes in the so-called action at the direction of the Opener when the story is sufficiently enervated as to be in danger of halting altogether. *Cascando* is a narrative "about" narrating, and about the agency to successfully finish a story; it is about a doubly absent figure called Woburn, to whom some events have seemingly occurred – doubly absent because "he" is absent from the play and because, since *Cascando* is a radio play, *all* the so-called characters are absent.

Beckett's release of salient information about the thematic context of the piece is adroit, economical, and elemental. Introducing an uncanny voice-upon-voice frame immediately, in a double story, he then immediately explores the nature of the power of voice to ground or root a – or any – history in narrative, written or spoken.

OPENER: [*Cold.*] It is the month of May . . . for me.
                          [*Pause.*]
                          Correct.
                          [*Pause.*]
                          I open.
VOICE: [*Low, panting.*] – story . . . if you could finish it . . . you could rest . . . sleep . . . not before . . . oh I know . . . the ones I've finished . . . thousands and one . . . all I ever did . . . in my life . . . saying to myself . . . finish this one . . . it's the right one . . . then rest . . . sleep . . . no more stories . . . no more words . . . and finished it . . . not the right one . . . couldn't rest . . . straight away . . . another . . . to begin . . . to finish . . .
                                                                 (*C*, 137)

The anxious assurance of the Opener's voice, coldly telling *his* story, checking himself ("Correct"), then opening the second voice, the occluded and spectacular, fragmented voice of Voice, leads the listener into the paramodern world of the *béance* and to the problematic of expressibility. What the Voice can express is what can be expressed, in shards, resting on the breath that signifies both presence and absence. Voice's is the uncanny voice of *aphanisis*, the fading of the subject in and because of the narrative by which he is known to us. Like Woburn, Voice is "waiting for night to fall" (*C*, 137) (which would signify the successful completion of narrative) but which can never take place. Voice's existence, like that of the Opener, depends on the success and the failure of this closure; that is, the ontological status of both

voices in the play, that of Opener and Voice, is balanced on the *unheimlich* threshold of disappearance.

For the "Opener," the narrative line moves in the course of the play from "It is the month of May, for me" to "yes, correct, the month of May, the close of May" (*C*, 142); that is, nowhere. For the powerful Opener, narrative is static, and does not advance. For the "Voice," contrapuntally interrupting and being interrupted by the Opener – being "opened" and "closed" by the "Opener" – the desired "story" of this apocryphal Woburn (*vouloir dire?*) progresses through a broken series of broken images that constantly strive both to locate him in traditionally structured narrative imagery, through a series of "falls" (first into mud, then sand, then onto stones, then into the bottom of a boat (could it be a relative of Rimbaud's) which apparently has floated out to the open sea, Woburn facedown in the boat's wet bilge unable to see anything, possibly dead. But see how easy it is to be a modernist! *Cascando* is not, I must constantly remind myself as a reader or listener, caught within the strange narrativity of the text, a story about Woburn but about the impossible closure of stories and the impossibility of telling a story that is not, as the Opener says, "in the head," despite his – or its – desire for "sleep," for "no more stories." Woburn's uncanny absent presence, even more than that of Godot, or of the rest of the world in *Endgame*, is at play with the dangerous and fearful *unheimlich*, eluding the holistic security of narrative substance, and persistently critiquing the very nature of presence and absence, of the mind's eye, and of the drama of narrative representation, all within the frighteningly uncanny framework of audibly fading narrative power. The seeming agent of Jacques-Alain Miller's "suture," the Opener, is a theatricalized quasi-positionality, a spectacle of the ear, out of which a necessary fiction of closure can be momentarily fabricated, then lost, perpetually, in repeated rounds of images. Not only is the narrative object, Woburn (the fiery burn of woe at the loss of finitude?), eternally lost in the fog of phrases by which we glimpse him/it, but so are the uncanny tellers, the Opener and the subordinate Voice. Voice's stated desire for the closure/suture of the story is simultaneously the desire for an escape from the *unheimlich* link with the Opener and a marker for Beckett's abysmal, elemental rhetoric, the "oscillatory style" characteristic of Beckett's French (*Cascando* is Beckett's only play written after *Fin de partie* in French). This style declares in its very surface the fleeting traces of the authority of the teller, who is present only in the trace of story.

But Beckett goes further here. This trace of the doubly fading storyteller is linked, in *Cascando* as elsewhere in Beckett and the paramodern, to the separation of which Derrida speaks in *Truth in Painting*, linked to Debord's reinscription of the image through the spectacle. In this paramodern realm of the "present-absent" image (what I have called elsewhere the "videated" image), all consciousness, like all narration, occurs in the *béance*, the infinite distance into virtual space, between narration and the narration of voice. Beckett cements this conceptualization of distance by making his short play a radio play, for which the listener's presence is not required and which produces its effect through electronic breath. Radio in this respect represents the mechanical videation of the voice, a distancing through electronic (re)production that

anticipates the imagistic distancing of cinema, television, video, and current virtual and cybernetic imaging. Beckett's radio play, infused with music, is at the same time a quintessentially Beckettesque play with word, syntax, and sign that denies the "metaphysical comfort," as Nietzsche calls it, of which presence (as a hegemonic and aesthetic construct) attempts to fabricate itself.

The Voice, which can be seen – or, rather, heard – as the *unheimlich* narrative voice of the Opener, is literally fading away through the course of the play, yet like Shelley's coal is never extinguished, as the seeming last traces of story continue to trickle forth, either from the Voice or from the Opener-proper. The Opener serves as the Joycean god of the creation, the modernist storyteller, as in the following passage:

> OPENER: God God.
>   [*Pause*.]
>   There was a time I asked myself, What is it.
>   There were times I answered, It's the outing.
>   Two outings.
>   Then the return.
>   Where?
>   To the village.
>   To the inn.
>   Two outings, then at last the return, to the village, to the inn, by the
>   only road that leads there.
>   An image, like any other.
>   But I don't answer any more.
>   I open.   (*C*, 143)

And to what does the Opener open? To the Voice, who is the uncanny repository of the faded image(s) of Woburn, who is "visible," as aural image, *because* of the faded expressions of which he/she/it consists. "Don't let go . . . finish," says the Voice following the Opener's outburst: "It's the right one . . . this time . . . I have it . . . we're there . . . Woburn . . . nearly −" (*C*, 143). In the monologue's dramatic *aphanisis*, a dwindling to nothing (or to nearly nothing), which makes the clearly erroneous claim that this story is the impossible "right" one that will allow Voice to "sleep" (that is, to be silent), one sees revealed what should not have been revealed (Derrida's *unheimlich* narration, and the *béance* across which it is stretched) and at the same time, as always in the *unheimlich*, the impossibility of revelation. In the play of narrative indeterminacy, *Cascando* demonstrates paramodern videation and its uncanny threat.

In the *béance* between Opener and Voice in *Cascando* we see that the framework of visibility is indeed iterability itself, but that iterability is devoid of agency, of meaning (*vouloir dire*) without reiteration, the repetition or re-presentation by which "narrative" comes into being. But reiteration is, within the law of discourse, erasure: simultaneous declaration and occlusion, as in Voice's story of Woburn, and Voice's inability to tell it. As Derrida points out in his critique of Freud, Freud employs metaphoric manipulation in his own narratives because Freud's stories, Derrida tells us, "illuminate the meaning of a

trace in general" (*WD*, 199). In Derrida's acknowledgment of Freud's concentration on the trace, rather than on the story, we see the impetus for Beckett's Opener, at the very threshold of prewriting and of writing. For Freud, Derrida points out, "force [read "visibility"] produces meaning through the power of 'repetition' alone" (*WD*, 213). But repetition "inhabits" visibility "originarily *as its death* [emphasis mine]" (*WD*, 213); this storytelling power is at the same time, uncannily, a lack of power, and thus allows language (expressibility) to come into being, to open. This occurs only through repetition. "Traces thus produce the space of their inscription only by acceding to the period of their erasure" (*WD*, 226). Beckett's Opener is aware of this, or at least seems to be in his own narrative:

> What do I open?
> They say, He opens nothing, he has nothing to open, it's in his head.
> They don't see me, they don't see what I do, they don't see what I have,
> and they say, He opens nothing, he has nothing to open, it's in his head.
> I don't protest any more, I don't say any more,
> There's nothing in my head.
> I don't answer any more.
> I open and close.   (*C*, 140)

However we are to read this constitutive "nothing" by which Opener defines what is in his head, and I suggest reading it as precisely the advent of the uncanny occlusion of narrative being, repetition indeed inhabits visibility "originarily *as its death*" for Opener, as he declares in his next speech:

> They say, this is not his life, he does not live on that. They don't see me,
> they don't see what my life is, they don't see what I live on, and they say,
> That is not his life, he does not live on that.   (*C*, 140)

This "other" voice, the voice of "they," to which Opener consistently responds, marks the gaze of the Other and the *heimlich* world of being from which Opener and Voice have faded. Indeed, it is precisely this point in the play at which Beckett's stage directions to both Voice and Music become "Weakening" as they re-enter the narrative. Beckett's direction in *Cascando* like Derrida's conclusion:

> Pure perception does not exist: we are written only as we write, by the agency within us which always keeps watch over perception, be it internal or external. The "subject" of writing does not exist if we mean by that some sovereign solitude of the author. The subject of writing is a *system* of relations between strata. . . . Within that scene, on that stage, the punctual simplicity of the classical subject is not to be found.   (*WD*, 226–7)

Beckett's drama, like much else in the paramodern, re-enacts the uncanny absence of the subject and the rhetorical transformation in re-presentation. Paramodern narrative is thus an "enabling" *unheimlich* that denies and

confirms, deposits and erases. Woburn is indeed, as image and as narrative construct, on my mind and in my mind's eye.

III THE OCCLUSION DISASSEMBLED

Beckett concludes *Cascando* with what seems in some respect to be the final attempt at Woburn's conclusive narrative framing, but which can never be that which cannot exist: no final narrative is possible in the world of nonclosure Beckett shows us. The story may wind down to a trickle, and then sink into an entropic whiteness on the page, but can never end, in the sense in which Beckett and his characters so desire it. His efforts at closure in the story of Woburn, which is indeed a tale of woe and indeed related to the distant and fading coal with which Shelley objectifies both the desire for closure and the desire that closure be eternally suspended, have this result:

> . . . this time . . . it's the right one . . . finish . . . no more stories . . . sleep
> . . . we're there . . . nearly . . . just a few more . . . don't let go . . . Woburn
> . . . He clings on . . . come on . . . come on –
> . . . .
>
> [*Silence.*]
>
> CURTAIN   (*C*, 144)

And once again, as always, it can't be finished, can't be done.

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8

THE NAMING OF THE HYMN

HEIDEGGER AND HÖLDERLIN

Karen Feldman

Heidegger's 1942 lecture course on Hölderlin's "Der Ister" is "about" the distinction between a poem's saying and what it says, yet *is* itself a rethinking of this distinction; hence the text of the lectures, in rethinking the notion of "being about" that governs the usual interpretation of poetry, operates at a sensitive limit of Hölderlin's hymn. That is, Heidegger does not read "Der Ister" as telling *about* anything, because for him the poem *is* nothing other than what is told.[1] It is difficult, however, to conceive of a poem as being other than "about" something, and to articulate anything "about" a poem without dragging the poetic word into a framework of "being about," that is, without importing a customary conception of representation and interpretation into the discussion. Thus Heidegger's lectures on "Der Ister," which read the poem as a telling *of* a river rather than a telling *about* a river, cannot but entangle themselves in the difficulty of saying otherwise than "about" the hymn. Moreover, our own every gesture of explication, interpretation, and inference reduces the movement of *Heidegger*'s text to "being about" something, and also reduces it to something "about" which to write or speak. That is, we can only say what Heidegger's lectures on "Der Ister" *are* by reducing them in one way or another, in saying what *they* are *about* – for example, that the lectures are about the "Ister" hymn, about the choral song of Sophocles' *Antigone*, about the historical (*geschichtlich*) relation between the Germans and the Greeks, and about poetizing. Such interpretive gestures treat the text as an entry to that which the text is about, whereas Heidegger complicates the distinction between the text and what it is about by questioning whether the being of Hölderlin's poetizing is different from the being of entities. This essay will attempt to hear the *naming* in Heidegger's text that undermines or complicates the distinctions which separate poetic saying from what is said, that is, which hold language apart from being.

Heidegger's attempt to read Hölderlin's "Der Ister" as not "about" a river thus entails rethinking what a poem is, for if we believe that we know what a poem is and how to read it, it is only because we have a prior understanding of poetry as a particular kind of writing that is *about* something in a familiar way. Hence Heidegger cautions,

> In order that we do not misinterpret Hölderlin's poetic telling – a telling
> that is quite other – by way of our habitual representations, this habitu-
> ation itself must be recognized for what it properly is.   (*GA 53*, 26)

The interpretation of poetry requires a general *pre*understanding of poetry as
to the *way* it is about what it is about. Our habitual understanding of represen-
tation, of the ways in which poems are "about" things, is in Heidegger's read-
ing inappropriate to Hölderlin's river hymn because, as we shall see, he reads
"Der Ister" as something other than a representation. To approach this other
kind of saying, in which the distinction between the text and that which it
is about is transformed or dissolved, requires first turning to the ordinary
conceptions of poetry.

The habitual understanding of representation that governs interpretation
assumes that a poem is not just "about" the sensuous image that the poem
depicts, but about something else that the appearance in the poem signifies.
Meaning (*Bedeutung*) consists in the reference toward a nonsensuous (*nichtsinn-
liche*) content. The poem's way of "being about" something thereby takes place
on two levels: the poem is about a sensuous entity, but the entity it is about
stands in for and points toward something of a different order of being, that is,
a particular nonsensuous meaning. Hence the possibility for a poem, allegory,
metaphor, or symbol to mean something depends upon the symbolic image as
the intermediary between the sensuous and nonsensuous realms. The notion of
two realms, sensuous and nonsensuous, belongs not only to poetry but to a
range of thinking and texts that we call "metaphysics," precisely because this
thinking presumes that there is a bounded realm of "the physical," and
moreover that it is possible to go *beyond* this physical realm. Heidegger thus
considers the framework in which the symbolic image operates to be a con-
summately metaphysical one, for only where there is a nonsensuous realm *apart
from* a sensuous one can there be an image that symbolizes a meaning. The
symbolic image is but one instance of the metaphysical subordination of the
sensuous to the nonsensuous at the level of actuality or truth.

Heidegger claims that while Hölderlin's hymns appear in the historical
epoch of metaphysics, the metaphysically determined logic of the symbolic
image does not apply to that poetry, and the kinds of interpretation that make
use of the metaphysical distinction are useless with respect to Hölderlin's
hymns. Yet these are "all the usual" (*alle üblichen*) ways of reading and interpret-
ing poetry. Therefore Hölderlin's poetry stands apart as something *un*usual. If
Hölderlin's hymnal poetry is not metaphysical, and metaphysics determines
the different kinds of being belonging to images, poems and entities, then the
very being of that poetry is in question. Hence to tell *what* that poetry *is*
requires a telling of a kind of being that metaphysics does not regulate.

So how are we to hear the poetic word, if not by listening for its meaning, if
not as a symbolic image? How are we *not* to *interpret* the poem, if interpretation
is also based on the foregoing explanation of meaning? How are we to read the
poem, if not by interpreting it, if not by assuming that it means? To put it
another way, what constitutes actuality and truth when the metaphysical
privilege of the nonsensuous has been set aside?

What Hölderlin's river hymn *is* can at this stage be said only negatively, for when Heidegger claims that "Der Ister" is not *about* a river, *not* symbolic, and *not* metaphysical, the burden of expressing this "other-than" aspect falls in large part upon the word "not." But how do we understand the negativity of this "not"? For instance, in the statement that Hölderlin's hymnal poetry "is not" concerned with symbolic images the "not" cannot be the "not" of metaphysical opposition. To hear the "not" as such an ontic negation would be to understand the hymn as merely an *empty* image, as a symbolic image that has been eviscerated of meaning. Such an understanding would yield a view of Hölderlin's poetizing that would in fact participate in the logic of the symbolic and the distinction it makes between sensuous and nonsensuous. This view would offer a truly meaningless image as the alternative to the symbolic image. While to read Hölderlin's hymn as meaningless imagery maintains a consistency with Heidegger's claim that the poetry is not *symbolically* imagistic, this reading nevertheless does not account for the assertion that "this poetry must stand entirely outside of metaphysics, and thus outside the essential realm of Western art" (*GA 53*, 21), for the characterization of a *meaningless* image still depends upon the distinction between image and meaning.

The "is not" of the statement that Hölderlin's hymn is not concerned with symbolic images must therefore be something other than an ontic negation. In this case, somehow the word "is" in the statement (again, that Hölderlin's hymnal poetry *is not* concerned with symbolic images) must not be heard as the "is" of metaphysical representation, in order *not* to drag the hymnal quality of Hölderlin's poetry into the metaphysical divisions of being. Herein lies a constitutive difference of the hymn, for the being that is articulated therein *is not* the being of an entity, and yet the negativity of this negation is not simply oppositional. The sequence of negations that characterize what Hölderlin's hymnal poetizing does *not* do – that is, Heidegger's declarations that Hölderlin's hymnal poetizing does not mean, does not refer, and does not say something "about" something – this sequence of negations also stands as a refusal of the question "*What is* Hölderlin's hymnal poetry?" This refusal does not simply refuse the characterizations of *what* his hymnal poetry does and is; it refuses to accept the *is*, the *being* of that poetry, as the being of an entity: "Only from what is said poetically here can we come to understand the status of what is" (*GA 53*, 22). Hölderlin's river poems do not mean in the manner of a sensuous image, for their saying *determines* our understanding of what is (*was hier das Seiende ist*) The metaphysical difference between "what is" a poetic river and "what is" an actual river depends not merely on "*what*" each is but also upon what the "*is*" is, that is, what *being* is according to the metaphysical distinction and according to the poetic saying.

In fact Heidegger does state "what" the river poems "are," but this "what" is no static entity. The river hymns *are* a *naming*:

> The poetic telling "of" ["*von*"] the river is also such naming of the river. Hölderlin's poetizing, particularly during the time of his hymnal poetry, is this naming.   (*GA 53*, 25)

The poetic naming that Heidegger describes is not just saying a name in the manner of a mentioning in accordance with an appropriate nomenclature. Poetic naming does not invoke a distinction between the sensuous and nonsensuous, nor a higher actuality at a level of meaning. Furthermore, as Heidegger's own scare quotes around the word "of" suggest (in saying that "the poetic telling 'of' the river is also such naming of the river"), the river hymns do not *tell of* the river according to our usual understanding regarding "telling of." Instead, Heidegger claims, "Here 'naming' is the name for poetic saying" (*GA 53*, 24). The telling-of that occurs through poetic naming names what is, and yet not as anything distinct from that which is. The being of the naming and the being of what is named are not distinct. Thus naming does not merely *occur in* Hölderlin's poem, it *is* rather what the poem *does* in its saying.

If there is no direct access to what poetic naming is in the first instance, then to say *what is* poetic naming – as we have in essence just done – when this naming has everything to do with "what is" in a larger sense, to say *what* poetic naming *is* is to come to it from an outside. In other words, to symbolically *represent* what this naming is would be to violate the character of naming as nonmetaphysical saying, as a saying that does not represent but that brings forth the being of what it says. The metaphysical "outside" of such naming distinguishes between the levels of being of poetic telling and that about which it tells. Naming cannot therefore be said according to any of the usual symbolic understandings of what poetry, metaphor, or allegory is.

The difficulty of thinking a saying that is not a saying "about" something, that is, the difficulty of not *representing* such a nonrepresentational saying, spreads from Hölderlin's hymn to Heidegger's lectures, since for Heidegger to characterize naming as a way of saying something without saying "about" it entails that he somehow avoid a metaphysical gesture of representing Hölderlin's naming. Therefore, the *name* for this *naming* cannot properly "represent" this naming, without dragging it into a metaphysically determined distinction between a saying and what is said. With the problem of naming poetic naming, Heidegger's own saying with regard to poetic naming is at a threshold of philosophy that verges on the very poetizing from which philosophical (that is, metaphysical) thinking holds him at a distance.

We can follow Heidegger's concern for nonmetaphysical poetizing by considering *his* further name for poetic naming, as indicated by what is said at the beginning of the course on "Der Ister," where Heidegger introduces the term "hymn" as the name of both a Greek celebratory song and of Hölderlin's river poem. Indeed the fact that Heidegger thinks Hölderlin's river poems as *hymns* establishes an essential relation between the poetry and what is poetized:

> The *hymnos* is not the "means" to some event, it does not provide the "framework" for the celebration. Rather, the celebrating and the festiveness lie in the telling itself.   (*GA 53*, 13)

The hymn exceeds an opposition between means and end, it accomplishes itself and that for the sake of which it takes place in one gesture. Its telling is the celebration which it tells in order to celebrate. The "what" that is told in the

hymn and the "how" of its telling are one. There is nothing other than the telling as the celebration – what is told and that for the sake of which it is told are bound together in the hymn. As the unity of celebrating and the celebration, the hymn *is* what it sings.

Thus "hymn" is the name for the poems that name poetically, for the unity of the naming and what is named. The Greek hymn does not tell "about" greatness, but rather makes for greatness, bringing it into a poetic language of celebration. In the unity that the hymn determines is precisely where Heidegger at the outset calls upon the *Antigone*:

> We thus encounter a turn of phrase in which the noun and verb, *humnos* and *humnein*, are immediately united. The most beautiful example of which we know are the words of Antigone in the tragedy by Sophocles ". . . not even as preparation of the bridal festival will a celebratory song ever celebrate me."   (*GA 53*, 1)

Heidegger considers the unity of noun and verb as the privilege of the hymn, for the word of the hymn celebrates and is the celebration, *tells and is* in one gesture, without any pointing toward, without recourse to any outside, and without separating the being of the celebrating from the being of what is celebrated. The privilege of the hymn rests upon its unifying the celebratory with the celebration. The hymn therefore takes place as a particular simultaneity or coincidence between the celebratory and the celebration.

The celebratory aspect of the hymn also derives from its relationship to community. On the one hand, the words of the hymn are what is celebratory, but on the other hand the hymn is a celebration when it is sung and heard in public. That is, the 'originary' unity of the hymn's celebrating celebration takes place through song, and this unity occurs in the community, in the publicity of the singing or performance of the hymn. The distinction between what is celebrated and the celebration does not obtain in the Greek hymn, perhaps because it is *music* above all. Moreover perhaps it is exactly this openness of and for the community that grants the hymn a special telling, a telling other than by means of symbolic imagery.

The simultaneity of the hymn, the unity of noun and verb that the hymn *is*, derives from its character as something heard – that is, from the fact that the community hears the hymn together and at once, and hears it both as the celebration and as what is celebrated. *Hearing* is indispensable for the hymn *and* for Hölderlin's "Der Ister" as such a hymn, for one must *hear* Hölderlin's hymn as the celebration of what is to be celebrated, rather than as a symbolic image within the epoch of metaphysics. Heidegger cautions,

> Are we here faced with the necessity of having to think otherwise, and not in terms of the "symbolic image," what "sign" and "language" mean? . . . Without any knowledge of what "sign" and "language" mean here, we must remain deaf to Hölderlin's poetry. This deafness is certainly not a harmless inability to hear, it is a failure to hearken and an inability to hearken obediently.   (*GA 53*, 31)

Heidegger evokes a danger of deafness with regard to poetic saying, a deafness that arises from a particular understanding of language that is concerned with symbolic images. Is deafness an arbitrary figure here, or is there a particular reason that we are deaf rather than blind or otherwise insensible to poetic saying? To be able to hearken means that one can hear the word "is" as poetizing, as naming, rather than as symbolizing, and hear the poetizing as a "telling finding of Being" (*GA 53*, 149). This telling finding evokes an "is" of poetizing, an "is" that one must hear as something other than the "is" which characterizes beings. Furthermore the telling to and within a community is itself the finding of being that the hymn is. The telling and finding occur simultaneously, for the hymn's performance, hearing, and the celebration take place at one moment that is shared by a community.[2]

We ought briefly to stop and ponder not just whether deafness is an *apt* figure here but indeed whether deafness is a *figure* here at all, where what is at stake is precisely a thinking otherwise than according to symbolic images. Is deafness a *figure* for a form of apprehension that would not be figuratively inclined? To be *figuratively* deaf to Hölderlin's telling Being is to "hear" it *as figurative*, to be caught in a metaphysically determined understanding of a figurative/literal opposition. To be literally deaf to Hölderlin's poetry is literally not to hear it at all. Could one be *literally* deaf but nevertheless *hearken* to the hymn? Is there a way to think Heidegger's allusion to the danger of *deafness* as *neither* figurative *nor* literal? To think the deafness at stake here as not literal and not figurative would mean to think *from beyond* the deafness that Heidegger warns of, for it would mean precisely *being able* to *hear* the *unity* of noun and verb, the poetic telling of what is.

Having considered briefly the naming at stake in Heidegger's reading of "Der Ister," as a hymnal telling *of* a river rather than as a telling *about* a river, let us conclude with a few remarks on the status of Heidegger's own telling. Heidegger begins his lecture course by stating that its goal is to "draw attention to [*aufmerksam zu machen*]" Hölderlin's hymns (*GA 53*, 1). The nature of this attention, however, is entirely at issue, for what is the proper attentiveness to Hölderlin's hymn? The attention that Heidegger wants to draw to the poem does *not* consist in simply bringing ourselves and our understanding to the poetry, in order to *produce* an interpretation *of* and knowledge *about* the hymn. Heidegger's attention to Hölderlin's "Der Ister" consists rather in an entangling intimation, as suggested by this statement in the first lecture:

> We must first become attentive to this poetic work. Once we have become attentive, we can then "pay attention to," that is, retain, some things that at favorable moments, will perhaps let us "attend to," that is, have some intimation [*Ahnung*] of, what might be said in the word of this poet.   (*GA 53*, 1–2)

The attending to the poetic work takes place at favorable moments (*in gutem Augenblicken*). In such favorable moments, we do not necessarily, but only perhaps (*vielleicht*) attend to something, and from it intimate what might be said in the word of this poet. In other words, Heidegger does not say that in

good moments we intimate what *is* said in the word of the poet, as though intimation were a question of access, or as though intimation were a precursor to interpretation, for example. Instead, the intimation that Heidegger is writing about is an intimation of what *might* be said in the word of this poet. In other words, intimation yields a *possibility*. The favorable moment is not a moment of certainty, not a moment of *knowing what* Hölderlin is saying, but of having an intimation of the possibility of his word. This essay has attempted to attend to Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin by shifting the emphasis of attention from the "what" of "what might be said" to the "being" of "what might be said," and moreover to the "might," that is, to the *possibility* of hearing other resonances of "what might be said" with respect to Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin.

Yet if our attention to Heidegger's lecture course is based upon an attempt to characterize "what is" *Heidegger*'s word, that attempt necessarily draws Heidegger's telling into a metaphysical determination, that is, as based on a notion of "being about" and the being of entities. At issue, however, is not the simple equation of "what" a poem or the Ister river "is," but the limitations of language with regard to *another* understanding of what is:

> This illusion of a mere playing with words cannot be overcome directly. We must even concede that such statements cannot be understood directly at all in the way that we understand the assertion that today is Tuesday. . . . Yet why do we then pronounce such statements? . . . in order simply to know that the river is an "enigma."   (*GA 53*, 39–40)

The "is" which equates "today" and "Tuesday" is not the same "is" that appears in the statement that "the poem is the river." The strangeness of the statements that seem to equate the river, the poem, and naming has its own determination: to celebrate, in the unity of noun and verb, the enigma of the river and its being. The "is" of the poetic telling does not symbolize a kind of equating that is appropriate to the being of static entities. The "is" of Heidegger's lectures on Hölderlin therefore opens a possibility not only of river and hymn but also of the "is" and of being. Such thinking, the thinking of *another* "is," cannot constitute a content, however, to be discovered by an exterior, interpretive reader; for this thinking *is not* but nevertheless *might be.*

Postcript
Several years have elapsed between the original composition of the foregoing reflections and their appearance in the present volume. In the interim, the thoughts and formulations that appear above could perhaps bear revision along the following lines.

The question of what sort of saying can be contrasted to "being about" might be reformulated in terms of performativity, namely in terms of the accomplishment *in* saying of what is referred to *by* that saying. Whether, however, such a performativity can be beyond or other than what Heidegger refers to as metaphysics remains an open question. Indeed the apparent gulf between ordinary telling and the dimension of representation on one hand and on the

other hand a poetic or a performative telling – what here is designated "naming" – calls for examination.[3] What is more, the status that Heidegger accords poetry and Hölderlin's poetry in particular would also require further investigation; indeed it calls for a consideration of the question as to whether Hölderlin says what Heidegger has him say, and, more generally, as to whether there is a poetic immediacy that would not be a function of representation and symbolic images.[4] Does the breach in a representational, constative, or "about"-oriented discourse, and specifically a breach in the direction of doing, execution, and accomplishment, entail the supersession of representation and symbolic imagery, or are the realms of representation and performance constituted in part by the very tension between them? The references to intimation and possibility in the last paragraphs of the paper are indicators of how Heidegger points in the direction of what might be understood in a broader context as the difficulty of preserving or even approaching, without hypostasizing and reifying, the performative or doing element of saying. Inquiries in these directions would necessitate a critical perspective on the exegetical, highly internal reading that is pursued in the pages above.

9

ON TRANSVALUING HISTORY

RILKE AND NIETZSCHE

Richard Detsch

Aside from Rilke's commentary on Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* ("*Marginalien zur Geburt der Tragödie*"), written in 1900 and found in the literary estate of Lou Andreas-Salomé, there is only one extended reference to Nietzsche in any of Rilke's works. In an essay he wrote as a nineteen-year-old entitled "Bohemian Strolling Days" ("*Böhmische Schlendertage*"), Rilke writes: "I belong to that group of people whom Nietzsche calls the 'historical.' Therefore, I avert my glance, since the present makes me freeze, back to a sun-bathed past [*Vergangenheit*]."[1]

Only one other comparison of Rilke and Nietzsche that takes this reference into account has come to my attention: an essay in the 1987 issue of the *Papers of the Rilke Society* (*Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft*) by Irina Frowen entitled "Nietzsche's Significance for Rilke's Early Concept of Art" ("*Nietzsches Bedeutung für Rilkes frühe Kunstauffaßung*").[2] Frowen's treatment, however, does not get much beyond a mere mention of the reference. She deals, for the most part, with Rilke's commentary on the *Birth of Tragedy*.[3]

It is clear from the reference to Nietzsche in Rilke's early essay that the poet had some acquaintance with Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation*: "On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life," and this before his first contact with Lou Andreas-Salomé. In it, Nietzsche speaks specifically of "the historical people [*die historischen Menschen*]".[4] What is interesting and paradoxical about Nietzsche's analysis is that for him the historical people are in reality unhistorical since history concerns them only insofar as it can be made to serve their life goals. Nietzsche refers to those who study history dispassionately for its own sake as hyperhistorical (*überhistorisch*). They dissect the past until it becomes something lifeless and produces a feeling of disgust in the observer, who sees in the disconnected facts only the eternal sameness of the dead. Those who are truly historical must be able to forget the past when it does not serve their purposes; for example, when the family or ethnic group to which one belongs and to which one remains bound by ties of ancestry has skeletons in its closet, aberrations and even crimes committed in the past to further the designs of its members. Here, it behooves the truly historical person to sweep aside the debilitating considerations on the past and, in a gesture foreshadowing the

overman of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, to seize the moment joyously, fearlessly, and victoriously (*NW*, 1: 212). There is no mistaking the fact that Nietzsche delivers what a proponent of imperialism would consider an effective justification of conquest and subjugation when he writes of the "formative power of a person, a nation, a culture" as the "power to grow in its own way from its own origins and to reshape and incorporate into itself what is past and what is foreign" (*NW*, 1: 213). And then Nietzsche envisions the "mightiest and most monstrous" of human natures which would not need the balm of forgetfulness because it would be capable of "drawing to itself and into itself all of the past, its own and what is most foreign to it, and transforming it as if into its own blood" (*NW*, 1: 213–14). There is a connection here not only to the later Nietzsche and his overman, who, in seizing the present moment wills also the circular chain of events leading up to it (*NW*, 2: 408–10), but also to the later Rilke, who writes of past events entering into his own blood. Rilke's letter from Duino of March 1, 1912, to Lou Andreas-Salomé is actually by way of complaint that he is not able to pursue historical studies in a systematic, detached way: "In my way of taking things in there is something that consumes them completely; it is as if I suck them up not only from the book but from my own knowledge. They get into my blood and there they get mixed up with God knows what and risk being as good as lost."[5] In fact, as I will attempt to show throughout the rest of this study, the incorporation of historical reality into the inner dimensions (*Weltinnenraum*) of the poet is one of Rilke's consistent concerns throughout his life; and with this finding I suggest that Irina Frowen is correct in rejecting the usual critical practice that divides Rilke's life into phases of development and insisting on the continuity of Nietzsche's influence from beginning to end (*BRG*, 32). If Umberto Eco is correct in referring to the "Cult of Tradition" and the "rejection of modernism" as the first two aspects of fascism in his recent article entitled "Ur-fascism" for the *New York Review of Books*,[6] then the unqualified acceptance by both Rilke and Nietzsche of the use to which certain less savory aspects of the tradition can be put is indicative of the susceptibility of both to a fascist perspective. For Rilke, this will entail an actual enthusiasm for the early manifestations of Italian fascism. I have borrowed the term "transvaluation" ("*Umwertung*"), which Nietzsche applies in later works to the replacement by its opposite of a system of behavioral norms rendered invalid in the light of an essentially purposeless existence, in order to designate the new emphasis and empathy that both Rilke and Nietzsche invest in a tradition historians are wont to examine from a neutral standpoint. In both cases, new validity is attributed to what was previously thought to be without existential value.

Rilke, in particular, looked to the past, and especially the early medieval period in European history, as being more "real," more truly alive than the Europe of his contemporaries. For him, the artisans and artists of this bygone period were able, quite literally, to transform their internal passions and emotions into external, visible expressions of the same (for example, castles, cathedrals). This is one sense of my adaptation of the Nietzschean term "transvaluation" with regard to Rilke. The other sense, for which I have coined the expression "transvaluing history," is specifically applicable to Rilke's conviction that at a time when artists are no longer capable of producing visible works

of such magnificent quality as in the past, he, the modern poet, can nevertheless immortalize the artifacts and traditions of the past in the inward intensity of his poetry. In the final analysis, transvaluing history means simply keeping what Rilke considers the spirit of the past alive in the present. But Nietzsche was no less an admirer of the past and despiser of the present than Rilke. Much of his admiration derives from his profession as a classical philologist. The great European civilizations of the past constantly elicit his praise and provide him with the opportunity to heap contempt on his contemporaries. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, he writes: "The deep respect for age and for tradition (The whole legal code rests on this double respect.) – belief and prejudice in favor of ancestors and against those to come – is typical in the morality of the mighty; and if conversely the men of 'modern ideas' believe almost instinctively in 'progress' and 'the future' and lack increasingly in esteem for age, the vulgar origin of these 'ideas' is thus abundantly evident" (*NW*, 2: 731).

The nineteen-year-old Rilke wrote the essay "Bohemian Strolling Days" at home in Prague in the autumn of 1895. His memory takes him back to the summer holidays he spent in northern Bohemia after having completed his college preparatory studies and his contact there with vestiges of a past that might draw forth Nietzsche's affirmation of the dramatic, immoral deed. Rilke tells us that he wants to conjure the ghosts that still haunt the ruins of Tollenstein; and here we must take him at his word, given his lifelong belief in ghosts. We have, with regard to this belief, not only his own testimony but that of his friend and patron, the Princess of Thurn and Taxis. This is certainly one way of keeping the "spirits" of the past, now perceived in the plural, alive in the present and therefore illustrative of how Rilke transvalues history. The ghost to which he makes specific reference is that of one Berechta von Rosenberg, who was married to a lord of Tollenstein. This lady had taken a fancy to one of the pages of her husband and had poisoned the latter's drink. Having become aware of his wife's intention, he forced her to also partake in the poisoned beverage. Since then, Berechta has found no rest and has been driven to nightly rounds of the castle ruins in search of her desired partner. In the ballad "Swanhilde," written three years earlier, Rilke employs the same theme. Here, the poet has his female ghost grab her reluctant lover in a manner reminiscent of Goethe's ballad "Erlkönig," even to the extent that Rilke uses Goethe's rhyme pair "*Gewalt-Gestalt*" in one place. This amounts, of course, to an all too obvious borrowing from the German Romantic tradition; but it is not to be dismissed as a mere appropriation that provides no indication of the true feelings of the poet. The threatening force emanating from the spirit of a dead woman seems to have caused Rilke to exclude himself from consideration of a logical final resting place for himself close to his beloved Muzot because of the interment in the same cemetery of a previous inhabitant of Muzot. This woman had become insane, having lost two suitors in a duel with each other, and froze to death in the cemetery near Muzot where she was also buried.

As a sixteen-year-old, Rilke had made the journey on foot to the castle ruins of Tollenstein. There, he left in the visitors' guest book a poem of twelve lines that, like his ballad "Swanhilde," does not distinguish itself by any particular sign of genius. It was signed with his middle name first, Maria René Rilke, and

dated July 28, 1892. The young poet extols the walls that had been erected in the distant past, coldly surveyed by the "sober century" of the poet's contemporaries. These walls remain as witnesses of a power long since lost to the world and will continue to do so in the future; they "will bring to coming epochs testimony of the past in the midst of the transitory" (*SW*, 2: 1217). The last line in German: "*in der Vergänglichkeit – Vergangenheit*" involves more than just a play of words. The past (*Vergangenheit*) is contrasted with the transitory (*Vergänglichkeit*) as that which will endure. The past, related semantically in German to the transitory (in English to passing away), has paradoxically taken on an attribute of the eternal. More than thirty-three years later, Rilke will write in a letter attempting to explain the *Duino Elegies* that the transitory things of this world can achieve permanence through their transformation in the artistic consciousness. This permanence is, in fact, the true essence of transitory reality because "transitoriness plunges everywhere into deep being" (*RB*, 3: 897). In another letter of Christmas Eve, 1917, almost eight years earlier than the one just cited, Rilke writes to a lady friend of his hope in spite of the death and destruction of the war. Note the Nietzschean seizure of the proper moment:

> Passing away, no, I'm not afraid of that, for why would there be in every experience a moment that turns the measuring devices around so that they sink to the depths where the moment is without end. This is today my Christmas: that I imagine this indescribable permanence of everything that truly existed. Why did it touch us, if not for the sake of our inner reality so that we may become more inward? And whatever passes away does not do so until we have taken from it its ability to exist.[7]

To exist means here to be in the cosmic inner space of the artistic consciousness.

Rilke also takes his cue from Nietzsche in the commemoration of Venice appearing in his poem of 1908, "Late Fall in Venice" ("*Spätherbst in Venedig*"). The building of Venice on a foundation of countless tree trunks in the shallows of an Adriatic lagoon was for Rilke a manifestation of the will: "From the bottom out of old forest skeletons there arises a will" (*SW*, 1: 610). One is reminded of Nietzsche's "will to power" and also of the "great will" exhibited by the caged panther of Rilke's earlier poem (*SW*, 1: 505). In his novel, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, Rilke speaks further of this will: "that Venice, willed in the midst of nothingess on sunken forests, forced to be and finally so thoroughly existent" (*SW*, 6: 932). As the poem in honor of the Tollenstein ruins already suggested, what was accomplished in the past by a strong will has more reality than the transitory present. In contrast to the empty-headed tourists in pursuit of "enjoyment," Rilke sees through the eyes of his Malte what Venice really consists in: "an example of the will at its most demanding and most severe" (*SW*, 6: 933). It is, therefore, not without significance that in the concluding sextet of his sonnet Rilke chooses to envisage not the autumnal mood of the city in the lagoon (Rilke himself had visited Venice in the late fall of 1907); rather, a Venetian Admiral of the city's heyday and his military exploits. These are expressive of the will the poet had earlier invoked. The poem ends with the adjective "fatal," which is descriptive of the fleet this

admiral outfits in the poet's imagination and is in this context synonymous with the English word deadly. This might seem out of character to the reader familiar with Rilke's antipathy toward his time spent at military boarding schools when he was young.

One should also be aware, however, that he chose for himself the middle name Caesar, following René Maria, in autobiographical notes written at the age of twenty, well after his unpleasant encounters with the military, and that his most popular story, written in his twenty-third year, deals with the love and enthusiastic death of a young officer who bore his family name in a battle during a campaign against the Turks in Hungary in the latter half of the seventeenth century. From these details, one can deduce that military personalities and events continued to hold a strong fascination for Rilke long after his negative experiences in military schools. And again, Nietzsche comes to mind, who, in the *Untimely Meditation* cited earlier, speaks of the "unhistorical condition" in which every "field marshal" conceives "his victory" (*NW*, 1: 215–16). Were Nietzsche's field marshal to assess, in a detached manner, his chances for victory by weighing the victories against the defeats of the past, he would probably not want to expose himself and his soldiers to the risks of the battle. We can assume, also, that if Rilke had let the distaste for military life gained from his early encounter with the military guide him in his choice of themes for his writing, then he would never have written his most popular story. Like Nietzsche's field marshal, so also Rilke and his military hero must act contrary to what history teaches them in order to be able to act at all.

In the letter from Duino of March 1, 1912, to Lou Andreas-Salomé, Rilke writes that he is steeped in historical studies of Venice. It is the fourteenth century that interests him above all, and it is important to note his reasons. This century, he claims, was just the opposite of our twentieth century. Nowadays, the inner feelings of human beings remain encapsulated in human consciousness without the need of finding an equivalent outside. Even material objects have developed an inner dimension, characterized by what Rilke calls the "vibration of money," and have achieved there "a kind of spirituality which exceeds their tangible reality." In the fourteenth century, however, Rilke finds that "money was still gold, still metal, a beautiful thing, the handiest and most understandable of all. And a feeling was not content with comporting itself in some inner realm and becoming something there; hardly was it here than it sprang into the most appropriate external form of appearance and filled to overflowing a world already full of visible objects" (*RB*, 1: 344). Rilke saw such a springing into being as a characteristic attitude of the time in the Palace of the Popes built in Avignon in the fourteenth century. Like the Tollenstein ruins, it bears witness in modern times to the spirit that once informed it. His studies of this period of Venetian history, as he writes to Lou, had led him to Avignon. And what could be more logical, since Avignon was at that time the centre of Christendom? In an earlier letter to Lou, Rilke describes a sojourn in Avignon during which he was daily impressed by the massive edifice erected by the Avignon Popes: "This hermetically sealed fortress in which the papacy, feeling decay around its edges, thought to preserve itself, cooking away in one last genuine passion. No matter how often one observes this desperate house, it

stands on a rock of improbability; and one gets inside only by vaulting over everything that is customary and credible" (*RB*, 1: 247). Rilke's Malte sees the papal palace in much the same way, as "an extremely makeshift body for the homeless soul of all" (*SW*, 6: 912). This edifice provides an example of how feelings and spiritual yearnings in bygone times achieved concrete realization in a way similar to how the historical figures of this autobiographical novel mirror the feelings of its modern protagonist. In this way, by endowing the figures of the past with a significance stemming from his own inner conflicts, Rilke can again be seen transvaluing history.

Rilke later writes of the protagonist of his novel that "the time of his troubles and troubled times of the Avignon popes are on a par" (*RB*, 3: 891). Just as in the letter to Lou of 1912 from Duino he complained that so much of his historical studies became so totally assimilated into the fabric of his own being that it was lost there, so now he admits that the historical figures dealt with in his novel are not really historical at all but only expressions of his protagonist's precarious emotional state (*Vokabeln seiner Not*).[8] Such is the figure of Pope John XXII who reigned over Christendom in Avignon from 1316 to 1334. It was a time, Rilke writes, that had brought "haven and hell to earth and lived by the powers of both in order to survive" (*SW*, 6: 912). As once the lord of Tollenstein had been the victim of a plot within his own household to poison him, Pope John now had to be constantly vigilant lest the "bowls seasoned with poison on his table" should be his undoing. And then there was the alleged plot of the Mohammedan ruler of Granada who instigated the Jews to attack all of Christendom by poisoning the wells. The Jews were supposed to have commissioned the lepers to cast their decayed tissues into wells from which Christians drank.[9] It was this Pope who first ordered that the Angelus bells be rung every evening for the purpose, according to Rilke, of dispelling the demons of the dusk. In a world so filled with darkness, the most frightening manifestation of which was the outbreak of the Black Death some thirteen years after Pope John's death, it is little wonder that the Pope could be moved to utter the heretical statement that there would be no enjoyment of the beatific vision, even for the souls of the blessed, until after the Last Judgment. It is therefore extremely significant that Rilke should profess such a strong attraction to precisely this century and should identify the tribulations of the protagonist of his autobiographical novel with those of the Avignon Popes.

For Rilke, it was important that the dark side of life – death, both physical and moral evil – be seen as an integral part of life. For him, as for Nietzsche, the affirmation of any one aspect of existence had to mean also the joyous acceptance of the whole of existence, including all those events of one's own past and the past of the human race that are generally considered immoral and irrational. Nietzsche, in the *Birth of Tragedy*, was able to identify this area historically as the Dionysian frenzies that underlay the balanced Apollonian art at the zenith of Greek culture. He would later posit it philosophically as the eternal return of the same, the essential mode of all reality with which only the overman can cope. Just as the Apollonian artist gives shape and harmony to the chaotic Dionysian expressions of emotions, so the overman must "stamp becoming with the character of being. This," Nietzsche writes in his posthumous

collection of aphorisms, "is the highest will to power" (*NW*, 3: 895). By affirming the truly vicious circle of all existence, the interminable flow of all causes and effects that leads again and again to the present moment, the overman accomplishes the superhuman task of forcing being, permanence, on a reality that is supremely and absurdly impermanent. Nietzsche specifically links this task to the transvaluation of all values in the same collection of aphorisms. He acknowledges that the thought of the eternal return of the same is the "most difficult thought" and then names the means to bear it: "*die Umwertung aller Werte*" (*NW*, 3: 438). Rilke's artist must also affirm the totality of reality (*Volzähligkeit*) which includes cruelty. But not only in art. Rilke asks in a letter written in December of the first year of the First World War: "Is there something similar in life? Are there conditions of the heart that include the most cruel for the sake of totality, because the world is not really the world until *everything* happens therein? I can imagine God as the being that allows *everything*, that constantly has before it the whole inexhaustible history of the world in different guises" (*RB*, 2: 479). Several months after the end of the war, at the beginning of a sojourn in Switzerland that was to last, with interruptions, for the rest of his life, Rilke writes in another letter of the relationship between the human realm and the realm of nature. During the war, human beings, including the poet himself who was never at the front, seemed to be so far removed from the realm of nature. "What," Rilke asks, "did the tree, the field, the evening landscape know of this wretched, rampaging, killing person?" But Rilke goes on to question the supposed harmony between the peacefully productive human being and nature that was a prerequisite for his own art. There is a terrifying side to nature also, which is nevertheless to be considered as a necessary part of its totality (*Vollzähligkeit*). The difference between the human being and nature is that the latter has no distance to its cruelty, its terrifying aspect, whereas human beings, in choosing cruelty, do so knowing that another, more human, choice is possible and thus cut themselves off from the totality of possibilities and become the exceptions of humanity. Then Rilke focuses on the human beings who would act like nature and would not be able to preclude the negative results of their acts: "evil, disaster, suffering, harm, death." Such individuals would be like a rampaging stream that cannot keep from growing in its destructive force because it cannot prevent the thaw that augments its volume (*RB*, 2: 590–1).

Such epistolary musings of Rilke must be kept in mind when approaching, for example, the line from one of the *Sonnets to Orpheus*: "Killing is a form of our wandering sadness" (*SW*, 1: 758). This is, by the way, the longest sequence of words to receive emphasis in the sonnets. All of the *Sonnets to Orpheus* were written at Muzot after the First World War, but the reference is actually to prewar hunting outings that Rilke witnessed neat Duino in a barren limestone region punctuated by caves. As Rilke relates in the sonnet and in a note explaining it, there was a custom in this region to startle pigeons out of the caves and shoot them as they flew out. One last such pigeon shoot before the war is described by the poet's friend Rudolf Kassner in his reminiscences of Rilke. Shortly before his trip to Sarajevo, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was a guest of the Princess of Thurn and Taxis and was such an avid "killer of

animals" that a pigeon shoot was arranged in his honor. Rumor was that he wanted to bring the number of pigeons he had killed to one million. Kassner stresses the irony of the situation since this "man of violence" is soon to meet his own "violent end."[10] There is nothing of this irony nor of any disapproval of violence in Rilke's poem. In a didactic, if not pompous tone, Rilke condones the custom of hunting pigeons by these means as follows:

> Far from the onlooker be every breath of pity
> Not only from the hunter, who accomplishes alertly and adroitly
> What betimes must be done.   (*SW*, 1: 758)

It is entirely conceivable that this is precisely the kind of time-honored custom that would complement the artifacts and natural objects Rilke commends to the angel in the Ninth Elegy. It is our task, Rilke writes, to transform these things internally, making them invisible and thus eternal.

If it is pity Rilke rejects in this sonnet, such is also the case in another of the *Sonnets to Orpheus* in which he deplores the loss of the instruments of torture and death employed as punishments in the past. He warns those sitting in judgment not to pride themselves on their disposal of these instruments as a sign of their mercy, for the God of real mercy would come with vehemence and extend his power more radiantly (*SW*, 1: 758). These instruments must, evidently, also find favor in the sight of the angel and be transformed into something eternal through the power of art. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Rilke was a proponent of the death penalty.[11]

One of the things that impressed Rilke most about the tower he was to inhabit in the last years of his life was its age. Dating from the thirteen century, it offered hardly any amenities of modern living. During the first winter he spent there, 1921–2, the remaining Elegies and all fifty-five *Sonnets to Orpheus* flowed from his pen; he credited this building with having granted them to him as though it were something alive. He writes yet in the rapture of creative inspiration to Lou that he went outside to stroke his "little Muzot" "like a big old animal" (*RB*, 2: 744). Hence, his beloved Muzot is not only a witness to the past as Tollenstein once was for Rilke but is transformed and assimilated to the creative impulses of the living poet. Muzot itself, like the pigeon shoot at Duino and the instruments of torture displayed in many a European castle, stands as another example of Rilke's transvaluation of history, or to use Eco's expression: the "cult of tradition."

In 1972, Egon Schwarz published in German a book that caused quite a stir in Rilke circles.[12] The English translation was published in 1981 with the title *Poetry and Politics in the Works of Rainer Maria Rilke*. The book deals in particular with two long letters Rilke had written in January and February of 1926, the last year of his life, to an Italian duchess about his admiration for Mussolini and Italian fascism. These letters were written in French and were first published in a Parisian edition of the correspondence between Rilke and the duchess in 1956. Not much was made of these letters until the appearance of the book by Schwarz, but since then, many voices have been raised defending Rilke and insisting upon relativizing these *vis à vis* the poet's life and work as a whole.

More recently, in 1992, Joachim Storck, the then vice president of the Rilke Society, published an edition of Rilke's letters on politics in which the editor stresses that there are many indications of a more liberal attitude of Rilke toward political developments (for example, his support of the movement for a less rigid school system at the turn of the century and of the movement for a democratic socialism at the end of the First World War) and that the letters at the beginning of 1926 should be considered as the product of distorted thinking resulting from the sickness that was to claim his life. What the editor does not concede, however, is that much of Rilke's thinking in these letters bears a striking similarity to earlier utterances in both epistolary and literary form. In fact, much of it can be traced back to the "historical" attitude that Rilke claims to have in reference to Nietzsche. History is, for Nietzsche, not the abstract, objective study of the past but something that can be put into the service of human life. History as it is approached by the historian brings human life to a standstill where it is coldly dissected in the manner of the natural scientist. This was the attitude exhibited by the contemporary observers of the Tollenstein ruins in the poem by the sixteen-year-old Rilke. They could not perceive the force that remained alive in these ruins and bore witness to a past outlasting all the intellectual abstractions of the present.

In the letter to Lou of March, 1912, and now again in the letter to the Italian duchess of January 17, 1926, Rilke looks to the witness of the past to provide examples lacking to the present: the transformation, in Nietzsche's terminology the transvaluation, of inner feelings into external, visible manifestations. Rilke's inner feelings correspond to Nietzsche's "symptom of strength on the part of the valuers," who posit values even though there is no basis in reality for these values. In Nietzsche's universe, which is without any purpose or meaning, these values are of significance only to those who posit them; but, they are not mere figments of the imagination insofar as they represent the only meaningful reality that exists. As Nietzsche sees what is internal becoming external reality, so too does Rilke, but only in respect to past generations:

> In the Middle Ages and until the 18th century the world was a singularly real world; the professions and the achievements, the destinies, the feelings, and the most secret inner impulses: everything attained a kind of realization, everything became visible and almost tangible. A very personal sorrow was not satisfied with transforming the affected being in its interior; one saw a glorious knight entering a religious order, or a very noble woman disappearing behind a nun's veil. The pride, the splendor of nobility were realized in the multitude of palaces and castles; and humble faith, the most pious distress, the eternal human desolation were joined to an infinite need for duration in erecting, by the hands of innumerable artisans, the witness and devout defiance of the cathedrals. Everything collaborated in enriching the domain of the visible. (*NW*, 3: 557)

"Even money," Rilke writes, echoing his words in the letter of 1912, "even money weighed heavily in chests and trunks with its metallic weight that it still had from the mountain."[13]

The present, however, was characterized for Rilke by a scarcity of durable, visible manifestations of human aspirations. The transformation from the invisible to the visible was now obviously not occurring (as the Seventh Elegy proclaims, the external world is growing ever smaller. [*SW*, 1: 711]); so now the effort must be in the opposite direction: from the yet remaining visible to the invisible realm of cosmic inner space (*Weltinnenraum*). This is the task the earth, in the present time, assigns to us: to recreate it invisible within. Whatever the direction of the effort, however, it is the creative intensity of the artist in the splendid isolation of his inner space that is crucial. He creates the only reality of importance; like Nietzsche's overman he puts, through his art, the stamp of permanent being on the incessant flow of the transient.

And also like Nietzsche's overman and Nietzsche's "historical people," Rilke's artistic personality acts from an impulse that is beyond good and evil and stems from an "authoritarian dictate" (*BzP*, 465). Thus, the dictator has as much a place in art as he has in politics, and in neither area will he be deterred by purely humane considerations or concessions to human freedom:

> Isn't it this, that the dictators, the true dictators, have sometimes understood when performing violent acts in a salutary and sure manner? One does wrong to nature when one imagines it to be slow and gentle. How many acts of violence, even cruelty, occur out of the depths of its innocence? And one must truly believe that the force used to create order (be it in art, be it in life) maintains, even where it is abruptly imposed, something of that deep innocence that we attribute to nature. (*BzP*, 465)

Such thoughts are not only the by-product of Rilke's sick-bed in the sanatorium near Montreux, as Storck and others would have us believe, but reflect what he had written in earlier letters and in earlier poetry; for example, see the letter of August 6, 1919, where Rilke connects human cruelty and cruelty in nature (*RB*, 2: 590–1; *BzP*, 269–75). The difference is that the allusions to cruelty and violence Rilke had made at various points in his life are now tied to the phenomenon of Italian fascism under Mussolini: "If one knows a path toward the future, one should not waste one's time avoiding injustice; one should quite simply surpass it by action. That's what it seems to me is happening in Italy right now, the only land prospering and moving upward" (*BzP*, 467).

The injustice in human acts that is surpassed and cancelled by more action is also a necessary consequence of what Nietzsche's "historical people" do. For Nietzsche, the "one condition of all that happens" is the "blindness and injustice in the soul of the one who acts" (*NW*, 1: 216). Rilke concentrates much of his effort in the next letter to the Italian duchess (February 14, 1926) on extolling nationalism over internationalism. Here Rilke treads in the footsteps of Nietzsche; however, one must draw a distinction at the outset. Both Nietzsche and Rilke are despisers of German nationalism. Both abhor as artificial the state Bismarck brought into being under the dominance of Prussia. This did not prevent both from emphasizing, in their earlier writings, the necessity of war for one's country over pacifist yearning (Rilke) and over

international finance interests (Nietzsche). In "The Greek State," one of five so-called prefaces sent to Cosima Wagner for Christmas, 1872, Nietzsche writes of the "international money aristocracy" that strives to avoid war by establishing a balance of power among nations and by taking the power to declare war from the monarchs and giving it to the people or their representatives: "They [the international finance interests] pursue this goal through the broadest possible dissemination of the liberal, optimistic world view that has its roots in the doctrines of the French Enlightenment and Revolution, that is, in a completely un-Germanic, genuinely Romanic, insipid, and unmetaphysical philosophy" (*NW*, 3: 283). This somewhat negative attitude toward the French or Romanic traditions and inclination toward the Germanic were replaced in the later Nietzsche by a European perspective in which the Romanic would assume the dominant position. Napoleon was Nietzsche's example of the kind of leader Europe should have; and, as always for Nietzsche, only the elite (*höhere Menschen*) should participate in governing.

Rilke's early loyalty to the "fatherland," as in the poem "Answer to the Call 'Down with Weapons'" ("*Antwort auf den Ruf 'Die Waggen Nieder!'*," *SW* 3: 415–16) was likewise soon to be replaced by a European perspective in which the Romanic would dominate. The many years Rilke lived in Paris and his time spent in Italy as well as his preference for Venice were no doubt a factor in this shift of loyalty. In the letter to the duchess, Rilke decries "vague internationalism" in addition to the artificial nationalism of Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II. Rilke argues that just as individual human beings must be at one with themselves before they can think of others, so too nations must have undergone a nationalistic phase before they can think of uniting with other nations (*BzP*, 469, 472). It is interesting to note that Heidegger used much the same argument in urging a "yes" vote in the Nazi-sponsored plebiscite of November 1933 to withdraw Germany from the League of Nations.[14]

The virtue of nationalism, Rilke maintains, is that it unites the individuals with each other, with their nation, and with their past. The link with the past is all-important; its absence was primarily the reason that Rilke could not sense anything worth appreciating in Germany under Prussian domination and that he soon came to abhor the war waged by this nation. Anyone knowing how utterly devastating Rilke's service in the Austrian army was for him might be surprised to hear him now claim with enthusiasm that he would nevertheless gladly have served and even died as an Italian or French soldier. He recalls the young men he had seen earlier in Venice, many of whom would lose their lives in the First World War, and thinks that they had attached themselves not to an abstraction like internationalism or humanity but to the yet visible glory of ancient Rome. They were able "not only to participate in the soul of their country but also to feel themselves as the body of that soul" (*BzP*, 469, 472). This ability to render feelings and aspirations visible is for Rilke the chief advantage of earlier times in human history over modern times. Now, nonetheless, the "glorious past" of Rome seems to be incorporated in the person of the Duce. "It is that unity perceived and consented to," Rilke writes to the incredulous duchess, "it is that glorious past of which your soil still bears giant vestiges that make possible this architect of the Italian will, this forger of a new

consciousness at the flame fed by an ancient fire" (*BzP*, 472). In Italy more so than in Greece, there is unity of blood and unity of idea. The "Romanic idea" was one of those rare ideas that was able to make its force felt throughout the world not because of its international orientation, but because of its pure national fervor. To indicate what the "Romanic idea" was in Rilke's time, the editor of these letters refers us at this point in his commentary to Mussolini's own words: "In five years Rome will have to appear as a wonder to the nations of the world. Vast, well-ordered, powerful, as it was at the time of the first empire of Augustus" (*BzP*, 670). The editor suggests that it was likely that Rilke had read and been impressed by excerpts of Mussolini's speech from which this quotation was taken. Had he read what Nietzsche had to say about the Italian national spirit in his last unfinished work, he might have agreed with it also. In comparing the Italian with the English, French, and German national spirits, Nietzsche writes: "The Italian has made by far the freest and finest use of what it borrowed and has invested a hundred times more than what it has taken out: as the richest spirit, that had the most to give away" (*NW*, 3: 562).

From the perspective of this study, the conclusion is that for both Rilke and Nietzsche, the Italian national spirit has succeeded the best in transvaluing history, in incorporating what they considered to be the spirit of the past into the present. Unfortunately for the world, this spirit in Mussolini's Italy, as in Hitler's Germany, would prove to be one of violent conquest and domination.

THE "FORCE OF RHYTHM" IN LIFE, PHILOSOPHY, AND POETRY

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INTRODUCTION

Robert Burch

The title of this section is drawn from Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*. Speaking of the usefulness of rhythm in the ancient world, Nietzsche writes: "Above all, one wanted to have use of that elemental overpowering which one experiences in listening to music: rhythm is a force [*der Rhythmus ist ein Zwang*]."[1] To this force, Nietzsche ascribes great weight. "Was there for the ancient, superstitious type of person in general," he asks,

> anything more *useful* than rhythm? With it, one could do anything – to advance some work magically; to compel a god to appear, to be near, and to listen; to make the future in accordance with one's will; to cleanse one's soul from some excess (of anxiety, mania, pity, vengefulness), and not only one's own soul but that of the most evil demon – without verse one was nothing; by means of verse one became almost a god. Such a fundamental feeling can never be entirely erased, – and even now, after people have fought against such superstitions for thousands of years, the wisest among us are still occasionally the fools of rhythm, if only in that they *experience* a thought as *truer*, if it has a metrical form and presents itself with a divine hop, skip 'n jump.   (*GS*, 140)

It would seem from these remarks that we ought to be suspicious of the force of rhythm. For how could one presume to "have use of" a force that was truly "overpowering"? Moreover, as Nietzsche himself emphatically declares, the usefulness of rhythm is a "*superstitious usefulness*" (*abergläubische Nützlichkeit*), implying not only that the belief that one could turn rhythm to one's purposes is a spurious belief, but also that the *Zwang* of rhythm is by its nature a deceiving force. Yet such is the power of the superstition of rhythm, that even in this serious age, it "still occasionally" compels and so "fools" the "wisest among us."

But like most matters Nietzschean, this one too is not without its masks and ironies. Whereas in this "enlightened" age we understand "superstition" pejoratively to mean an ignorant belief divorced from true knowledge and power, thought more originally superstition may well have been the "reality" of old. It would constitute that reality in the form of the "beliefs" (*Glauben*) that a "type of person in general" placed "above" (*über*) a people as their highest values. In the *Zwang der Rhythmus*, then, would be heard "the voice of their will to power," their "superstition" being, as it were, the "I-stand-beyond" of their creation

of values, the "tablet of their overcomings."[2] But even if that were what superstition was, what it is now is the product of a millennial fight against supposedly ignorant beliefs. The force of rhythm remains as only a trace of that former power, with "the most serious philosophers" of today occasionally "repeat[ing] the *sayings of poets* to give their ideas power and credibility." Yet, when it comes to truth this confirming agreement of poetic utterance, Nietzsche claims, is dangerous. "For as Homer says: the bards tell many lies."

Now, if Nietzsche sides here against the fools of rhythm, he does so with blatant irony. Deliberately disregarding his own counsel, not only does he appeal to a supposedly poetic saying to make his point, but in doing so Nietzsche also seems ironically to lie about its source. For it is not the poet Homer who utters this warning about himself and his ilk, as Nietzsche says, but the philosopher, Aristotle, for whom it is proverbial (*paroimiakos*) that poets lie.[3] Doubtless, Nietzsche knows of this provenance, and knows too, that to end with a "paroemiac" saying is itself a metric convention, and is thus a poet's "lie." In all of this, moreover, there is a paradox implied in the choice Nietzsche seems to propose here between "truth" on the one hand conjoined with certainty as the goal, and a "power" on the other hand that enables one to do "anything." There is likewise a paradox implied in the juxtaposition of the "superstitious" and "foolish" with "the wisest among us." For in a vague echo of Pauline doctrine,[4] it remains ambiguous here whether, in contrast to the "seriousness" of the philosophers, the "wisdom" of the wisest among us does not lie precisely in their still being the "fools of rhythm."

The essays gathered in this section all proceed from the assumption that rhythm and its agnate properties are a force to be reckoned with. Halliburton initiates this reckoning for us by means of his reflections on the phenomenon of speed, specifically as it relates to the character of modernity. That there is some such relation needs hardly to be said. To remark on the rapid pace of modern life and the current pre-eminence of the phenomenon speed is nowadays a commonplace. Moreover, it is likewise a commonplace to take one's stand decisively in regard to this phenomenon, either celebrating speed in all of its aspects as the avatar and medium of enlightenment, progress, and prosperity, or decrying it in the name of a beleaguered sensibility and a past way of life that was altogether more *acceulliant*. Yet "in studies of modernity," Halliburton opines, "the phenomenon of speed, while sometimes being factored in along with other matters, is not investigated as thoroughly as its importance warrants." With his contribution to this section, Halliburton's intention is to begin to redress this deficiency.

Of course, within the limits of a short essay, he cannot presume to offer such a "thorough" investigation, but only to establish an initial framework or the "indices" for one. To be more precise, Halliburton's purpose is simply to identify aspects of the phenomenon of speed which, in considering the character of modernity, such a framework would have to accommodate, thereby indicating the many dimensions of the phenomenon that need to be investigated more thoroughly. In this respect, what is to be emphasized is the plurality of Halliburton's approach – that these are his reflections on speed, diverse and wide-ranging. Thus, it is with self-conscious irony that he moves speedily from

one aspect of the phenomenon to another, drawing on a variety of thinkers and literary scholars to highlight its various dimensions in relation to the character of modernity. In the process, Halliburton gestures toward a need to develop an appropriate sensibility to speed in "this age of relativity and reflexivity." Taking his cue from Proust and Wolff, he suggests that we need to become, as it were, "connoisseurs of velocity," developing a capacity to "relativize" speed so as to know when and how to employ it to advantage. In this way, then, we may succeed in taking ourselves beyond fixed, blanket judgments of "good" and "bad" with respect to the phenomenon of speed, in which the modernist and futurist thinking and experience of speed is pitted against that of the romanticist in a way that leads to standstill – or rather leads to the paradoxical standstill of the romanticists having to fight apace a "lost cause."

The second essay in this section speaks more directly to the specific issue of rhythm. Compelled by rhythm, Aviram writes about it principally as a literary theorist. For him, rhythm calls for thinking on two accounts. The first is pedagogical. Students tend to rebel against the seeming authority of meter in the name of poetry, which they take to be not only *not* metrical but a rebellion against meter, yet without them actually knowing much at all about meter. "They know of a rebellion," Aviram says, "but not what the rebellion rebels against." In the meantime, their lives are "full of poetry" that has "great power for them, and it is all *quite metrical*." Second, Aviram is concerned specifically with what relationship obtains between subjectivity and rhythm. In this regard, he juxtaposes the Nietzschean tradition, where, he claims, rhythm "provides a caesura of thought in its subjectivity," with the views of Henri Meschonnic, for whom rhythm is said to be "continuous with the subjectivity of thought."

The discussion which ensues enunciates two seemingly contradictory meanings of "rhythm": a conventional meaning where rhythm is regular repetition; and a meaning where rhythm is the "shape" or form of subjectivity in discourse. Rather than trying to resolve these differences directly, either by taking sides or by making more subtle distinctions, Aviram adopts an Heideggerian strategy. He points out, quite rightly, that in all of this discussion and debate about rhythm, and in all of the differences of opinion on the matter, some vague average understanding and experience of rhythm is always already presupposed. In order to thematize that understanding and experience so as to discern *what* rhythm is, Aviram undertakes a brief phenomenology of something that we "know to be rhythmic," in this case, dance. This phenomenology allows him to identify in terms, for example, of temporality, spatiality, corporeality, the essential elements of rhythm in dance from which can be extracted and exhibited the elements of rhythm as such. Aviram concludes with a general redefinition of rhythm, according to which it refers to "a regular alteration of event and non-event and the realization of regularity-as-rule through irregularity." From this sense of rhythm, Aviram adduces implications for an anarchical model of democracy and freedom, thereby addressing some of his initial concerns about subjectivity. He adduces as well implications for understanding poetry, and poetic images, as the *expression* of rhythm, implications which then bear upon his initial pedagogical problem.

In the final essay in this section – and of the volume – Babich considers the

"practice of music," showing how the musical expression of philosophy derives from the broad definition of music in antiquity. Far from a defunct ideal, a musical philosophic practice might permit the multiplicity of voices and values we have come to recognize as more and more necessary. To this end, Babich attempts, as it were, a fugal reprise of the theme of an integrally musical thinking. She approaches the exposition of this theme by means of a discussion of the scene from the *Phaedo* in which is recounted Socrates' ironic attempt to practice popular music at the end of his life. This episode gives genuine voice to the thought that philosophy is not opposed to, but is, as Socrates himself suggests, "the highest form of music."[5] The second episode of this "fugue" gives voice to Nietzsche's conception of musical thinking in a way that leads Babich to the key notion of philosophical "concinnity." "Concinnity" is a musical term that she has introduced into the discourse to suggest the affinity between reader and author as a matter essentially of *thoughtful attunement*. The third voice to be sounded is that of Heidegger, a discussion of the "cadence" of his thought serving to give fullness to the developing theme of the "music" of thought as "thoughtful attunement."

What this reprise points to is a specifically musical thinking as a musical ethics of philosophy that goes beyond both the traditional metaphysical opposition of philosophy and poetry, and the derivative postphilosophical practices of a "polylogue" connoisseurship. The phrase, "musical ethics of philosophy," is to be read here at first as a subjective genitive. For the issue is that of the very *ethos* of philosophy itself as inherently "musical" (as opposed to, so to speak, a "musical ethics" that philosophizing might generate as one branch of its knowledge among others so as to stand in the place of existing ethical models). Yet, of course, for a philosophizing that is inherently musical, and which, moreover, resonates with Nietzsche's thought, such divisions cannot in the end be maintained. The musical ethics *of philosophy* would in itself sound the *musical ethics* of philosophy as an "original ethics."

10

REFLECTIONS ON SPEED

David Halliburton

> I wish the regulation of the post office adopted by Congress last September could be put in practice. It was for the riders to travel night and day, and to go their stages three times a week. The speedy and frequent communication of intelligence is really of great consequence.
>
> Thomas Jefferson, 1777

> For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind. . . . The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving or extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.
>
> William Wordsworth, 1850

> We declare that the world's splendor has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing motorcar . . . is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samoth* race. . . . Already we live in the absolute, since we have created speed, eternal and ever-present.
>
> F. T. Marinetti

All three of these perspectives proceed from the assumption that speed, in one or another form, is an essential feature of life from the Enlightenment to the present.

In Jefferson we hear the very voice of the Enlightenment, clear and poised but impatient for change, the voice of a type of man an Emerson would call representative. When Jefferson wonders at the rapid westering of American settlers, or when he acts to accelerate institutional innovation, he adopts an attitude toward change that was gaining momentum in his own day, and that members of "advanced" industrial societies take for granted in ours. In Wordsworth we hear the voice of the lost cause, the voice of a sensibility beleaguered by that rapid delivery of news (which is the sense, for both authors, of the term "intelligence") for which Jefferson yearns. But the lost cause is still a cause, so

that we hear Wordsworth's sentiments still being echoed by groups and individual citizens opposing, for example, too rapid deforestation, or, more generally, the excess of "information" delivered excessively fast. In the third and final perspective we hear the voice of the radical visionary, who would speed as a way to trope the harnessing of high velocities (epitomized by the military airplane) for programs of violent aggression and conquest. Although that program is also, in one way, just another lost cause, in another way it is not without implicit appeal for those who worship, in the spirit of Futurism's founder, at the altar of speed's peculiar glamor. I have deployed these perspectives, not as formal indices of my own, but as a way of furnishing – dare I say quickly? – an initial framework for the latter.

My essay takes a point of departure, in the first instance, from social theorists who have have been paying attention to speed because recent and current social formations, and especially social systems, as that term is understood by Niklas Luhmann, have exhibited extremely rapid rates of change combined with structural stasis and immobility. For further and complementary points of departure, I draw on a variety of thinkers and literary scholars, with a view toward exploring differences and similarities in the area of inquiry that this volume appropriately calls "thinking between philosophy and poetry."

ACCELERATION

In *The Consequences of Modernity*, Anthony Giddens, the British sociologist and intellectual spokesman for New Labour, refers to the "careering," or "runaway, juggernaut character of modernity" and to the fact that we are "aboard" it and not, as we might wish, driving it.[1] What makes us feel like passengers rather than drivers is in part the sheer *affect* of speed, its ability to capture us like a passion and rush us on, fuelled by "the sheer pace of change which the era of modernity sets into motion. Traditional civilisations may have been considered more dynamic than other pre-modern systems, but the rapidity of change in conditions of modernity is extreme" (*CoM*, 52). In studies of modernity the phenomenon of speed, while sometimes factored in along with other matters, is not investigated as thoroughly as its importance warrants. Jean-François Lyotard is a happy exception to this pattern, as attested in a discussion of gaming in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. The context is the difference between standard competitive games, in which no player knows what any another knows, and games of perfect information in which any player knows what any other player knows. In the latter situation,

> the best performativity cannot consist in obtaining additional information in this way. It comes rather from arranging the data in a new way, which is what constitutes a "move" properly speaking. This new arrangement is usually achieved by connecting together series of data that were previously held to be independent. This capacity to articulate what used to be separate can be called imagination. Speed is one of its properties.[2]

Unfortunately, Lyotard sometimes leaves us wishing for amplification, and

such is the case when he engages Luhmann's perspectives on the same issues. Luhmann argues that modern social systems of all persuasions are burdened by a complexity that must be reduced in some significant degree if they are to become manageable; and manageability presupposes a paradigm of acceleration surpassing more traditional notions of temporality: "If all messages could circulate freely among all individuals, the quantity of the information that should have to be taken into account before making the correct choice would delay decision considerably, thereby lowering performativity. Speed, in effect, is a power component of the system" (*PMC*, 61). Desire for speed and acceleration, like Hobbesian desire, is inherently imperialist. What we call globalization, the engrossing of the local, the regional, and the national into planetary patterns, entails important notions of velocity: to be global is to be connected immediately, not later; while the appeal of a communicative innovation such as the Internet is its claim to deliver what it delivers more or less instantaneously. The ulterior significance of such a capability needs to be examined in relation, for example, to Heidegger's notion of a technological standing reserve; but that is a topic for another time and another place.

In *Social Systems*, Luhmann observes that systems have different ways to solve the problem of gaining time, the first of which is mnemonic: they can simply store up in their structures (memory serving as one such structure) against a time when one aleatory factor or another provides them with an occasion for realizing potentialities not otherwise feasible. He then turns to the issue of primary interest to us here.

Second, there is *speed*: mechanisms that enable the system to increase the tempo of its own processes *vis-à-vis* relevant environmental purposes – for example, stimulate possible environmental processes and to prepare for eventualities, to retreat and recoup, or to avoid specializing in a way that is too sharply defined and thus too dependent on the environment. One who is faster can do something else in the meantime.[3]

The statement appears to assume that specialization slows down systemic operations; since specialization is always a possibility and often a necessity, does this merely mean that it should not be permitted in excess, on the understanding that failure, through lack of restraint, may result, entropically, in a drift from speed-up to slow-down? Perhaps this is the meaning of "too sharply defined," so that the objective of acceleration can be understood only negatively – as doing "something else" without necessarily knowing in advance what that something else might be.

Luhmann is richer, if also thicker, when he describes strategies for revising and reintegrating temporal relations, the chief of which involves "the capacity for actualizing what is temporally not actual, with the risk of remembering or anticipating incorrectly." He explains that "the classical title for this, *prudentia* as the feature that distinguished man from the animals, also signified that there are strict limitations on the correct uses of this potential for actualizing what is not actual" (*SS*, 46). What these are, Luhmann does not for the moment say; more to the present point, he assigns equal importance to speed, which must be conserved, even as speed "on other levels of systems and processes" (*SS*, 46) is

being presupposed, by which I take him to mean that the need for its expend-
iture is a standard presupposition.

Like Michel Serres, though less often, Luhmann explicitly situates his dis-
course between philosophy and literature, lending concreteness and texture to
propositions that are otherwise, and sometimes excessively, abstract. Such is the
case with the fabled race between the hare and the wife-and-husband duo of
hedgehogs, which in Luhmann's redaction turns into a story of two kinds of
speed. As his opponents carry on a relay race, the innocent hare scurries on in
the belief that he is running against a single opponent. In other words, the
hedgehogs

> can communicate quickly in a very selective way, while the hare can
> merely run quickly. Earlier societies seemed satisfied with such *prudentia*.
> Only in highly complex societies, only in the modern period, is interest in
> a time-transcending *prudentia* overtaken by interest in acceleration: the
> eighteenth century discovered that taste can judge more quickly than
> reason because it can individualize its criteria and can legitimate them by
> self-observation.   (*SS*, 46)

MEASURING

No American of his generation experiences the dynamics of history more keenly
than Henry Adams, and none struggles harder than he to take the measure of
confusions resulting from the speed of modern developments, especially in
technology. Boldly, Adams strives to develop an explanatory formula capable of
being communicated to a general audience. To do so, however, he must first
devise an image directly, economically, and graphically capturing the essence of
speed and acceleration as cultural phenomena.

> The image needed here is that of a new center, or preponderating mass,
> artificially introduced on earth in the midst of a system of attractive forces
> that previously made their own equilibrium, and constantly induced to
> accelerate its motion till it shall establish a new equilibrium. A dynamic
> theory would begin by assuming that all history, terrestrial or cosmic,
> mechanical or intellectual, would be reducible to this formula if we knew
> the facts.[4]

Invoking the established view that science regards the measurement of
motion as both proximate and ulterior aim, Adams proposes to illustrate
dynamism and acceleration by measuring the rate of coal production in the
nineteenth century, on the assumption that "the ratio of increase in the volume
of coal-power may serve as a dynanometer" (*A*, 1168). The latter term, coming
into English usage during the Industrial Revolution, first refers to an instru-
ment for measuring amounts of energy exerted by human beings or animals
(1810); by 1862 it broadens into a generic term for any instrument capable of
measuring the motive force of an engine. The advantage of this analogy, for
Adams, is that with it he can measure both quantitative *increments* of production

and their *rates* of acceleration. Coal production, it turns out, had been doubling every ten years between the beginning and the end of the century; so that, reckoning recursively, the 30,000 horsepower propelling an ocean steamer in 1905 can be seen as being halved for every decade back to 1835, to yield the equivalent of just 234 horsepower. Rather than follow the author's subsequent calculations, we would do well to consider the implications of a shift that Adams makes from quantity to quality. In working out the illustrative ratios of acceleration (or retardation), he explains, the difficulty lies, not with the calculations applied, but with a qualitative something-or-other beneath, behind, or beyond the reach of arithmetic. That something-or-other is intensity.

INTENSITY

> In truth, his chief trouble came not from the ratio in volume of heat, but from the intensity, since he could get no basis for a ratio there. All ages of history have known high intensities, like the iron-furnace, the burning-glass, the blow-pipe; but no society has ever used high-intensities on any large scale till now. . . .   (*A*,1168)

How well this generalization might stand up under closer scrutiny must remain an open question here. My concern is with the tension, so typical of the author, between the conflicting forces – and, ultimately, just about everything counts for Adams as a force – of quantity and quality. Universal and unrelenting, never appearing to relax, this tension bears a distinct family resemblance to the intensities noted above.

The term "intensity" exerts particular energies not only here, in Adams, but in the modern age generally. When he introduces the term to English usage, Sir Robert Boyle, the pioneering chemist and physicist, signifies "a strained or very high degree . . . extreme, force, strength, depth, etc." (*A*, 1665). A hundred years later the scientific overtones become more precise with "degree or amount of some quality, condition, etc.; force, strength, energy; degree of some characteristic quality, as brightness, etc.; in *Physics*, as a measurable quantity." In studies of which Adams was probably aware, Clark Maxwell speaks of intensity in the force of a charged body (1882); while in the early days of the still camera, intensity registers a quality peculiar to photographic images (1850). The relevance of the latter to someone like Adams, who closely followed the increasingly rapid course of technological innovation in his times, hardly needs to be underscored. We may well underscore, however, the larger fact that here in Adams, as in the age as a whole, quality and quantity meet head on, with the former submitting, as it were, to be measured by the latter; and the fact that while these scientific and technological concerns were exerting their influence, the Romantic Robert Southey has been defining intensity as "high-strung quality of personal feeling or emotion," and – as the poet illustrates by evoking John Bunyan's concentration as he reads his Bible – "strenuous energy." If space allowed, we could ponder the factors that drew not only Southey but John

Keats and William Hazlitt back to the Longinian origins of the aesthetic of intensity (especially as compounded, as it was for Longinus, with speed).

SPEED AND REVOLUTION

Among collective social phenomena occurring in the last two centuries, none is more closely associated with speed than the phenomenon of revolution. For those who apprehend revolution in primarily social, political, and cultural terms, as the Romantics inclined to do, and as most of us continue to do, the events in America and France toward the end of the eighteenth century stand as paradigmatic. Not so for Adams, who fastens his attention on scientific and technological developments prior to, during, and after the Industrial Revolution.

> Nothing so revolutionary had happened since the year 300. Thought had more than once been upset, but never caught and whirled about in the vortex of infinite forces. Power leaped from every atom, and enough of it to supply the stellar universe showed itself running to waste at every pore of matter. Man could no longer hold it off. Forces grasped his wrists and flung him about as though he had hold of a live wire or runaway automobile; which was very nearly the exact truth for the purposes of an elderly and timid single gentleman in Paris, who never drove down the Champs Élysées without expecting an accident, and commonly witnessing one; or found himself in the neighborhood of an official without calculating the chances of a bomb. So long as the rates of progress held good, these bombs would double in force every ten years.   (*A*, 1171–2)

Several observations suggest themselves. Most immediate is the kinetic energy in the style: *whirled about, leaped, running to waste, grasped his wrists and flung him, runaway automobile*. The last figure of movement and speed, the reader will note, anticipates the runaway juggernaut of which Giddens speaks above. The larger point is that in his representation of speed, Adams here turns his energies to the quality of feeling in what is occurring. He succeeds, to the degree that he succeeds, partly by personification: universal forces grasp the wrist of representative Man and fling him about, and so on. Placing this figure in the midst of the scene in this way increases the vividness – increases, indeed, the intensity – of the representation. There remains, from the range of rendered effects, the author's superintending irony, which can speak in mordant tones of bombing force as exemplifying "the rates of progress."

A little further on, he directs the energy of irony's coarser cousin, the grotesque, to render nature's response to human investigations:

> Every day nature violently revolted, causing so-called accidents with enormous destruction of property and life, while plainly laughing at man, who helplessly groaned and shrieked and shuddered, but never for a single instant could stop. The railways alone approached the carnage of war;

automobiles and fire-arms ravaged society, until an earthquake became almost a nervous relaxation.   (A, 1172)

Overall, Adams' description manages by implication to subordinate social, political, and cultural history – the very kind that he himself has been writing – to the technologically and scientifically represented realm of universal force. In this connection the bomb is dissevered from any immediate or explicit historical context; to the world-weary author, the event but typifies recurring patterns of human behavior, and if this vaguely implies the danger of frequenting neighborhoods with government offices, the entire matter matters less than the more intriguing calculus of acceleration: in ten years, Adams predicts, there will be bombs with twice the force.

FUTURITY AND REVOLUTION

In his study of the contemporary fashion system, Roland Barthes not only recognizes the need to include temporality in his social semiosis; like Adams, Lyotard, and Luhmann, he specifically recognizes the importance of the increasing *rate* of change as well as the economic foundation of, as it were, programmed speed. "There is no secret about the economic implications: Fashion is sustained by certain producer groups in order to precipitate the renewal of clothing, which would be too slow if it depended on wear and tear alone; in the United States, these groups are aptly called *accelerators*."[5] Renewal, in this sense, means not merely the reintroduction of the same, but, through rhetoric and other modes of representation, making the same seem new. Last year's fashion, like the fashion of the year before or the year before that, is occluded as thoroughly as possible in the language of this year, of novelty, of the now – what Barthes calls neomania, and rightly associates with the rise of capitalism and the Renaissance practice, among the well-off, of ordering a new portrait every time one bought a new costume (*FS*, 300). Sooner or later, a mania for the new alters temporal priorities, redirecting desire from the past to the future, where novelty is, so to say, normative. Increasingly, every new must be represented as still newer, a dissemination of a forever arriving future that, exhausting itself in the present, rapidly recedes into the past. Add to this the fact that the every activity of every agent in the fashion system – designer, manufacturer, marketer, sales clerk – is directly or indirectly competitive with every other activity of every other agent, and you have the ideal condition for systemic inertia at a rapid rate.

Sartre in the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* already sees the need to interpret not only the scope of historical changes, together with the intellectual models or paradigms underlying their interpretation, but the speed of those changes. In the Great Fear of 1789 the communication of news on what was happening in the capital occurred at markedly different rates of speed, and the very fact that it spread more quickly to one locality than to another helped to determine the quantity and quality of anxiety. What the fear signified

was above all a structure of alterity in relation to Paris. News was scarce, slow to arrive, and impatiently awaited. . . . it spread unevenly and

confusedly in the countryside. . . . Thus the contrast between the rapidity of events in the capital and Versailles and the scarcity of information showed everyone his passivity in relation to those Others (aristocrats, deputies of the Third Estate, the Parisian people) who made History in Paris.[6]

The premise underlying this and other concepts of tempi is the paradigmatic power of futurity. The French provincial population does not concern itself with the remote past – a matter for historians – but rather with the immediate past, a past so near that it can seem a dimension of the present. The root assumption is that the future depends upon speed of reportage: if we are to seize the opportunities that will enable us to achieve the future we desire, we need to know as quickly as possible what is going on in the capital. Slow news, like old news, is no news. There is thus a circularity from the present to the future and back again to the present; and a commensurate temporality connecting the period of time it takes to "receive" the past (as virtual present) to the period of time it takes to judge it and to apply what is learned from that general judging to particular cases.

That Sartre already knows this is attested by his approach to the phenomenon of rapid inflation in a given market, an approach that clearly anticipates Barthes' concern for acceleration.

> The depreciation of money accelerates as everyone tries to get rid of it in order to acquire real values; but this behaviour determines the depreciation *above all* by reflecting it; in other words, it is future depreciation, in so far as it imposes itself on the individual to the extent that he *foresees* it as the unity of a process which conditions him, and it is this future depreciation which determines present depreciation.   (*CDR*, 1: 289)

Temporality as here conceived suggests a paradigm shift from the primacy of the past to the primacy of the future. The shift involves, *inter alia*, a new sense of the kinetic relation between past and present, a sense that becomes apparent with Leibniz, who passes on to posterity not only the foundations of the calculus but the concept of what is for most of us a more important innovation: insurance. Now, it may at first appear that the rapid spread of the concept and practice of writing insurance makes us incline to complacency: let us not worry about the future; we have taken sufficient care regarding it; and so on. But it is just as likely that such an orientation, by contracting the distance between now and later, effectively foreshortens our sense of time, prompting us to do as quickly as possible whatever it is that we can or wish to do.

In Leibniz's century and before there is abundant evidence of another economic phenomenon geared to futurity and speed, namely, global trade, and within that nexus, credit. The damage done to the naval hegemony of Britain from costly wars makes the English realize that their country must mount a systematically commercial enterprise capable of collective assertiveness and increasingly swift development. As if to testify to this state of affairs, Herman Melville complains in effect that in naval matters paradigms and practices are

being altered too quickly; already Lord Nelson's *Victory*, overtaken by the tides of change, lies beached in a museum. In fairly short order, there had come into being what J. G. A. Pocock calls a "political arithmetic," a paradigm for means of measuring quantitatively what each citizen contributed to the total national economic and cultural stock. "At a very rapid pace, an entity known as Trade entered the language of politics, and become something which no orator, pamphleteer, or theorist could afford to neglect and which, in an era of war, was intimately connected with the concepts of external relations and national powers.[7]

The twin phenomena of trade and war emerge not only as powerful forces in their own right; as *accelerating* forces, which they also are, they underline the generative power of the paradigm shift from the dominance of the past to the dominance of the future:

> Credit, or opinion, is the appropriate form for the ancient faculty of experience to take where money and war have speeded up the operations of society, and men must constantly translate their evaluations of the public good into actions of investment and speculation, so that political behavior is based upon opinion concerning a future rather than memory of a past.   (*MM*, 523)

KINESIS

Trade and war are kinetic, they depend on our ability to move quickly – to seize the day before the "other" does. In the early nineteenth century, such kinesis is conspicuous, in the United States, with the rapid empowerment of a national market rationale under President Andrew Jackson, together with the Madisonian vision of a nation speedily escalating and expanding. Pocock, calling Madison's thought "kinetic and romantic," characterizes the American people and their republic as being "in perpetual and kinetic growth" (*MM*, 523). In the same way Thomas Jefferson, and later Alexis de Tocqueville, observe the growing restlessness of settlers who, disturbed by the accelerating pace of migration in their direction, decide, like Huck Finn, to light out for the Territory.

Turning again to the "felt" side of kinesis, we encounter velocitation, that is, the adjustment that occurs as one moves for a sustained period at an accelerated pace. It is the feeling you have, when you are motoring at sixty miles per hour, that you are motoring at fifty. Speed that is already high as well as continuously accelerating becomes normative, at least within industrial societies; and as this proceeds apace on an increasing, indeed global, scale there is an increasing tendency to lose touch with the basal phenomenon of "long time." Pierre Bourdieu describes this species of time in the following terms: "The objects endowed with the greatest distinctive power are those which most clearly attest the quality of the appropriation, and therefore the quality of their owner, because their possession requires time and capacities which, requiring a long investment of time, like pictorial or musical culture, cannot be acquired in haste or by proxy."[8]

REFLEXIVITY AND COMMUNICATION

Speed and speedy change draw interest, in contrast to the temporality just described, from a reflexivity wherein "social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices" (*CoM*, 38). Controlled by no overarching paradigm or master narrative, and driven by market factors and forces not well understood, reflexivity can but speed up its own processing.

To analyze social systems, according to Luhmann, "one must begin with the facts that all processes are communicative processes and that reflexivity must be acquired as communication about communication" (*SS*, 450). Out of all the possibilities that *might* be selected for communicative purposes, one *must* make a selection; for, "the basic form of all processual reflexivity is always the selection of selection" (*SS*, 453). Speculating about the feasibility of specialized reflex relationships, Luhmann finds support in areas of specialized communication

> and especially, but not exclusively, in the function domains that have brought forward symbolically generalized media of communication. Thus in love, communication has become thoroughly reflexive: that one communicates about love and how (bodily behavior is very much a part) is also a proof of love, and there is no possible proof outside of this self-reference.   (*SS*, 452)

In the discursive domain of communicating about communicating, there is a preoccupation with quickening movement, quickening speed, quickening acceleration. Proust attests to such acceleration everywhere. Watching fashionable people pedalling about on their bicycles, witnessing the increasing speed of railroad trains and the advent of aviation, riding through the countryside in his novel motor-car (no pun intended) at the rate of a speeding cannonball, as he put it: Proust, who went so far as to dub his chauffeur a "nun of speed," became what can only be called a connoisseur of velocities.[9]

CONNOISSEUR OF VELOCITIES

As early as the fifth paragraph of his novel, Proust describes an important experience of movement and speed. After broadly describing some of his early experiences of sleep, he depicts an anonymous person dozing off in an "abnormal position" in an armchair, whereupon "the world will fall topsy-turvy from its orbit, the magic chair will carry him at full speed through time and space, and when he opens his eyes again he will imagine that he went to sleep months earlier and in some far distant country."[10] Moving from this locus back to his own, Marcel records the physiological sensations occurring at the moment of awakening, when

> everything would be moving round me through the darkness: things, places, years. My body, still too heavy with sleep to move would make an

effort to construe the form which its tiredness took as an orientation of its various members. . . . Its memory, the composite memory of its ribs, knees, and shoulder-blades offered it a whole series of rooms in which it had at one time or another slept; while the unseen walls kept changing, adapting themselves to the shape of each successive room that it remembered, whirling madly through the darkness.   (*RTP*, 1: 5)

Later, Marcel draws a striking analogy between the way in which he composes, as it were, the appearance of the little band of girls, and what amounts to a sort of speed-reading; his specific point of departure is the code that their collective appearance presupposes and that Marcel must interpret through "these rapid decipherings of a person whom we see in motion exposing us thus to the same errors as those too rapid readings in which, on a single syllable and without waiting to identify the rest, we base instead of the word that is in the text a wholly different word with which our memory supplies us" (*RTP*, 1: 601–2). Subsequently, in *The Captive*, his imagination engages the question of who or what Albertine and Andree truly are, which is to say, the nature of their essence. In approaching the matter he does not first speak of speed in general terms, but rather moves speedily in his exposition, switching in an instant from third-person depiction to second-person apostrophe: "Had either of them a sentimental regard for me? And, in themselves, what were Albertine and Andrée? To learn the answer, I should have to immobilise you. . . ." Thus he switches in an instant from third-person depiction to second-person apostrophe. Presumably, I am not the only reader who, on perusing these sentences after some lapse of time, is still caught off guard by the suddenness of the move. In any case, Marcel then proceeds to engage speed, of a particular type, thematically; returning to the words that signal the shift, we may proceed further in examining this communication about communication:

To learn the answer, I should have to immobilise you, to cease to live in that perpetual expectation . . . I should have to cease to love you, in order to fix you, to cease to know your interminable and ever disconcerting arrival, oh girls, oh recurrent ray in the swirl wherein we throb with emotion upon seeing you reappear while barely recognising you, in the dizzy velocity of light.   (*RTP* 2: 242)

High speed such as this, as Proust conceives of it, is neither spontaneous in origin nor continuous; in a moment it could slip into immobility were it not for the irruption of bodily enticement:

That velocity, we should perhaps remain unaware of it and everything would seem to us motionless, did not a sexual attraction set us in pursuit of you, drops of gold always different, and always passing our expectation. On each occasion a girl so little resembles what she was the time before . . . that the stability of nature which we ascribe to her is purely fictitious and a convenience of speech.   (*RTP* 2: 242)

Here, communicating about communicating is quite deliberate, as the author exposes the linguistic fundament by which our ideas and images of natural being are continuously if inconspicuously supported. At the same time, the pattern of rendered movement merges with something like a traditional concern with mutability: the girls, envisioned in the form of drops of gold, so consistently differ from themselves that their being, as it emerges, carries over little of the appearance it presented when apprehended earlier.

A significant shift of a somewhat different order occurs two paragraphs later when the narrator speaks of "the surprising faces that used to appear every day when, in the dizzy speed of our expectation, our friends presented themselves daily, weekly, too different to allow us, as they have halted in their passage, to classify them, to award degrees of merit" *(RTP* 2: 243). Here the difference that prevents "us" from comprehending and rewarding the girls, though due to rapidity, is not due to any rapidity in *their* being but rather to the velocity inherent in *our* way of regarding them.

By Proust's day the notion that the age is an age of speed had become generally accepted, and even welcomed, despite some dire implications for culture:

> People said that an age of speed required rapidity in art, precisely as they might have said that the next war could not last longer than a fortnight, or that the coming of railways would kill the little places beloved of the coaches, which the motor-car, for all that, was to restore to favour. Composers were warned not to strain the attention of their audience, as though we had not at our disposal different degrees of attention, among which it rests precisely with the artist himself to arouse the highest. For the people who yawn with boredom after ten lines of a mediocre article have journeyed year after year to Bayreuth to listen to the Ring.   *(RTP* 2: 154–5)

Communicating about communicating, Proust suggests that the artist can command an audience if she does not let the easy glamor of speed beguile to lower levels of arousal. Somehow the artist must respect the power of density and patience, and the temporality in Milan Kundera's recent *Slowness* and in the entirety of *A la Recherche du temps perdu*. The sheer hypotactic complexity of the latter acts to constrain any errant impulse to parse rapidly – except on the *Monty Python* show, where performers compete at summarizing Proust. Meanwhile, in the age of bites, e-mail, faxes, nanno seconds, and accelerating hypervelocity, Wagner devotees in substantial numbers still patiently attend the Ring, where the ultimate constraint against hurry, the fixed notation of the score with its prescribed tempi, maintains its sway.

SPEED AND TECHNOLOGY

Like Henry Adams, and unlike many other moderns, Proust closely observed developments in contemporary technology, considering in particular some of the broader implications of the interrelationship between speed and technology. Before examining these observations, however, we should remind ourselves

that speed, for Proust, is not an isolated theme, but emerges from a general background of movement, motion, or kinesis, themselves connected oppositionally, and sometimes dialectically, with immobility, repose, or stasis. So intricately are these phenomena wound together that in regarding any one of them the reader is perforce regarding some or all of the others. A second point is that the earlier parts of Proust's novel are generally, and fittingly, attuned to earlier times in the author's represented life, with its relatively bucolic atmosphere and cherished moments of repose, its impressed natural patterns and its exquisite old churches – especially the one at Combray – and its overall nourished nostalgia. Concern with speed already plays a notable role in *Swann's Way*, for example, where the memorable experience of the steeples of Martinville, with their shifting nuances of appearance, is associated with the venerable technology of the horse-drawn carriage: "At a bend in the road I experienced, suddenly, that special pleasure, which bore no resemblance to any other, when I caught sight of the twin steeples of Martinville, on which the setting sun was playing, while the movement of the carriage and the windings of the road seemed to keep them continually changing their position" (*RTP* 1: 138). This is the author's persona, speaking in a kind of virtual present about the past. More impressive, and more complex, is the evocation of the experience that Proust interpellates into the present text as a fragment of writing executed on the day in question despite the bouncing of his careering carriage.

> Alone, rising from the level of the plain, and seemingly lost in that expanse of open country, climbed to the sky the twin steeples of Martinville. Presently we saw three: springing into position confronting them by a daring volt, a third, a dilatory steeple, that of Vieuxvicq, was come to join them. The minutes passed, we were moving rapidly, and yet the three steeples were always a long way ahead of us . . . Then the steeple of Vieuxvicq withdrew, took its proper distance, and the steeples of Martinville remained alone, gilded by the light of the setting sun. . . . We had been so long in approaching them that I was thinking of the time that must elapse before we could reach them when, of a sudden, the carriage, having turned a corner, set us down at their feet; and they had flung themselves so abruptly in our path that we had barely time to stop before being dashed against the porch of the church.   (*RTP* 1: 139)

Not many writers appear to understand, as does Proust, that architecture is in large part an art of motion. Henry Adams is a notable exception, with his vivid rendering of the volatile forces engaging one another in the structure of the great gothic cathedrals. John Ruskin is, of course, another exception, and Proust's fascination with Ruskin, as critic of art and architecture, is well documented. In the steeples that Proust describes, verbs of motion render vividly the same dyamic forces depicted by Adams: *rising*, *climbed*, *spring*, *volt*; but perhaps the most vivid evocation comes near the close of the passage when the steeples fling themselves so abruptly that they almost dash the travelers against the porch.

At the end of the sketch, looking back, the young author-to-be, despite the fact that the horses are hurrying his carriage along, writes down his impressions of the gradual realignment of the three steeples (those of Martinville plus the single spire of Vieuxvicq) that approximates a state of merger: "I could see them timidly seeking their way, and . . . drawing close to one another, slipping one behind another, shewing nothing more, now, against the still rosy sky than a single dusky form, charming and resigned, and so vanishing in the night".   (*RTP* 1: 139–40)

Where Proust is concerned, the issue of speed, as it subsequently develops, turns not merely on rapid motion as such, but on its perpetual acceleration, and on the ways in which contemporary technologies and social practices foster and perpetuate that acceleration. By way of example, consider bicycle riding, which in the 1890s became an international fad as large numbers of riders and onlookers poured into velodromes for the races; so commonplace was the association of bicycle riding with aerial motion (we still speak of speed as high) that some two-wheelers were actually equipped with artificial wings. Proust observes: "The young racer mounted her machine. For a moment the bicycle swerved, and the young body seemed to have added to itself a sail, a huge wing; and presently we saw dart away at full speed the young creature half-human, half-winged, angel or peri, pursuing her course" (*RTP* 2: 499). Proust compares "the little acousticon" of the 1889 Exposition with which "one barely hoped to be able to transmit sound from end to end of a house" to "the telephones that soar over streets, cities, fields, seas, uniting one country to another" (*RTP* 2: 367). In *The Captive* he writes what begins as a paean to this new technology but ends in ironic deflation: "I did not leave the telephone without thanking, in a few propitiatory words, her who reigns over the swiftness of sounds for having kindly employed on behalf of my humble words a power which made them a hundred times more rapid than thunder, but my thanksgiving received no other response than that of being cut off" (*RTP* 2: 499).[11] At home with his *théâtrephone* Proust could enjoy instantaneous reception of broadcasts from venues such as the Opera; and it is known that he took a keen interest in photography, where he used it analogically in remarks on mutability. Thus "our way of forming a conception – and, so to speak, taking a photograph – of this moving universe, hurried along by Time, seeks on the contrary to make it stand still" (*RTP* 2: 1063).

Proust was well aware of early attempts to produce a rapid series of images that might constitute a simulacrum of movement. The development of these inventions and refinements was itself extremely rapid. So closely did one development follow another, near the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, that names for the various processes fairly dashed into view: bioscope, biograph, kinetoscope, cinematograph, zoopraxiscope are some of the terms. Proust probably knew of the celebrated experiment facilitated by Governor Leland Stanford, who owned race horses, and was convinced that, at some point in time, as they ran at a trotting gait, all four hooves cleared the racing surface. In a wager with a friend who thought otherwise, Stanford engaged the services of a photographer, Edward Muybridge, to decide the issue. Setting up

twenty-four cameras with trip wires to snap one image per camera, Muybridge in 1879 produced a photographic simulation of rapid movement that proved Stanford's claim. More importantly, experts have since credited the experiment with helping to shape the future of what would come to be called motion pictures. A similar image seems to appear in Proust's imagination when at an outing of the well-to-do he watches the quick passage of celebrity riders: "And at every moment, Mme. Swann was receiving the salutations of the last belated horsemen, who passed through in a cinematograph taken as they galloped in the blinding glare of the Avenue" (*RTP* 1: 487). The description, brief as it is, captures the failure of synchronicity as meaningful coincidence – of being where one ought to be or desires to be at a given time. And while it is true that this technology preserves the captured motion, it preserves the belatedness as well, so that the ironic consequence of the ability to record movement is a condition of fixity.

The same period that saw the advent of motion pictures, give or take a few years, saw the advent of aviation. Proust makes reference to the number of aerodromes that have sprouted around Paris and depicts the magic in their motion:

> At any moment, amid the repose of the machines that lay inert and as though at anchor, we would see one, laboriously pushed by a number of mechanics. . . . Then the engine was started, the machine ran along the ground, gathered speed, until finally, all of a sudden, at right angles, it rose slowly, in the awkward, as it were paralysed ecstasy of a horizontal speed suddenly transformed into a majestic, vertical ascent. (*RTP* 2: 452)

Far from replacing his fascination with the more established technology of the railway, Proust's love of aviation complements it, just as it complements his love of the motor-car. His longest and most searching account of the latter hearkens back to the early passage, discussed above, which gravitates around the problem of getting oriented to one's position in space.

> It may be thought that my love of magic journeys by train ought to have prevented me from sharing Albertine's wonder at the motor-car which destroys our conception – which I had held hitherto – of position in space as the individual mark, the irreplaceable essence of irremovable beauties. And no doubt this position in space was not to the motor-car, as it had been to the railway train . . . a goal exempt from from the contingencies of ordinary life, almost ideal at the moment of departure, and, as it remains so at that of arrival, at our arrival in the great dwelling where no one dwells . . . the station. (*RTP* 2: 288)

To enter a city through the railway station is to encounter it more directly and centrally than is usual with the motor-car; the very name on the front of the station encapsulates its essence as it waits there like a theater expecting its audience. But by virtue of its maneuverability, the motor-car enables a fuller

and more rounded experience for its passengers. In relating what amounts to a kind of pursuit, Proust depicts

> those ever narrowing circles which the motor-car describes round a spell-bound town which darts off in every direction to escape it and upon which finally it drops down, straight, into the heart of the valley where it lies palpitating on the ground; so that this position in space, this unique point, which the motor-car seems to have stripped of the mystery of express trains, it gives us on the contrary the impression of discovering, of determining for ourselves as with a compass, of helping us to feel with a more fondly exploring hand, with a finer precision, the true geometry, the fair measure of the earth. (*RTP* 2: 288)

FROM SPEED TO SLOWNESS

In contrast with the "short" time of everyday experience and the literary representation of that experience, the "long" time of number-crunching demographics looks almost motionless – rather as glacially slow *structures* appear against the background of swifter microlevel *events* in the historical methodology of the Annales School. By way of a cautionary note, the former cannot simply be identified with the long time of Pierre Bourdieu. Structures entail extremely long-term patterns in agriculture, transportation, the spread and control of disease, clothing, mining, metallic and paper money, and the like. Events, by contrast, are on the scale of, say, modern diplomatic history, where the success of policies may depend on a particular communication between the national capital and one of its outposts. More concretely, the term event would apply to an episode such as the storming of the Bastille in 1789, a high-profile moment that draws its symbolic power, however, precisely from the way it assimilates energy from popular resent-ment over the great inequities in the structural areas noted above. The long time of Bourdieu, it would appear, seems to fall somewhere between these other temporalities. At least this is the way these things look to me now as I return to my starting point, the consequences of modernity, and take the opportunity of a closing word, first from Milan Kundera, then from Proust and Virginia Woolf.

In Kundera's novel entitled *Slowness*, speed is represented as peculiarly atem-poral. The novelist states that a man speeding on a motorcycle "is outside time; in other words, he is in a state of ecstasy; in that state he is unaware of his age, his wife, his children, his worries, and so has no fear, because the source of fear is in the future, and a person freed of the future has nothing to fear."[12] Kundera envisages this atemporality as a mode of ecstasy, and on a first view one might be tempted to connect this with the ecstasies of temporality, described by Heidegger, in which Dasein goes out and forth from stasis. But Heidegger privileges the future in the belief that one is always already going beyond the present towards the "not yet" that is to be. He is highly skeptical, moreover, about the epoch's preoccupation with speed in all its modes. Kundera's think-ing runs in the opposite direction:

Speed is the form of ecstasy the technical revolution has bestowed on man. As opposed to a motorcyclist, the runner is always present in his body, forever required to think about his blisters, his exhaustion. . . . This all changes when man delegates the faculty of speed to a machine: from then on, his own body is outside the process, and he gives over to a speed that is noncorporeal, nonmaterial, pure speed, speed itself, ecstasy speed.   (*S*, 2)

Whether corporeality and materiality are transcended in speed is an aspect of this passage that I am inclined, as I think Virginia Woolf would be, to question. Attempting to define life, Woolf, for her part, offers the following observation:

Why, if one wants to compare life to anything, one must liken it to being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour – landing at the other end without a single hairpin in one's hair! Shot out at the feet of God entirely naked! . . . Yes, that seems to express the rapidity of life, the perpetual waste and repair; all so casual, all so haphazard. . . . Everything's moving, falling, slipping, vanishing. . . . There is a vast upheaval of matter."[13]

This is from a meditative tale entitled "The Mark on the Wall," evoking the experience of a woman whose imagination meanders back and forth between the visible mark and the trains of thought to which it gives rise. The sketch may serve here as a counterstatement to Kundera's de-materializing. When one is blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour, one does not come out of the experience bodiless. Quite the contrary: as the wording and the exclamation point make clear, one is embarassed just because one is so corporeally – hairpins and all – *there*. The mutability Woolf goes on to describe has, perhaps, an entropic overtone, but make no mistake about the fact that materiality is not being transcended; do her concluding words not place what has happened precisely in the context of *material* being?

The sketch concludes ironically, suspending speed and change, as we are told that the mark was after all the very epitome of slowness and long time: "Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail" (*MW*, 89). But there is more in this ironic deflation than first meets the eye. For it expresses in a quiet way Bernard's defiant confrontation with death at the end of *The Waves*; a confrontation, furthermore, that sees the hero, and his archetype Percival, moving with utmost speed: "'It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man's, like Percival's, when he galloped in India. I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myelf, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!'[14] In this age of relativity and reflexivity Woolf relativizes speed – bad if it blows you helplessly through the Tube, good if you can employ it against your enemy. Finally, reflexivity is implicit as she takes into her present account her previous sense of speed as precisely the opposite of what she now, from a longer temporal perspective, represents it to be.

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11

THE MEANING OF RHYTHM

Amittai Aviram

What is rhythm? Recently, people have been thinking, talking, writing, and arguing about rhythm. More is at stake in this controversy than mere definitions. On the one hand, thinking about rhythm and language inevitably leads us to poetry, and *what* we think has immediate repercussions in both the teaching and the practice of poetry. On the other hand, rhythm may provide us with an opportunity newly to understand the relation between language and the body, a question which is a version of the question always at the core of metaphysics, and whose importance has never been more evident than it is today in areas as diverse as aesthetics and politics. This essay is an effort to contribute to the discussion, first by looking at the terms of the controversy, and then by attempting to go beyond it. The latter attempt will take the form, or at least the style, of a somewhat Heideggerian meditation upon rhythm, given the evident and often beautiful "poetic" quality of Heidegger's writing. But unlike Heidegger, I shall also try to make clear the political and social implications of this question – that is, why rhythm is worth thinking about, why rhythm in poetry matters.

The term *rhythm* has been used for the past few centuries to mean the regular occurrence in time or space of a foregrounded event. More specifically, both in music theory and in general discourse, *rhythm* can mean three distinct things: (1) a regular beat; (2) a pattern of various elements (such as a poetic meter in Greek or Latin) which is organized in relation to the regular beat and which is ultimately repeated as a higher-order rhythm; (3) a *realization* of the beat or the pattern, which need not be regular, but whose very irregularities foreground the regular beat against which it is organized and in relation to which it is perceived. Insofar as all three of these may be thought of as hierarchical levels of complexity in the expression of a fundamental regular beat, all three of them may be called "rhythm" at present and have much the same significance in a theoretical discussion. I shall call this approach the "conventional" meaning of the term *rhythm*. It is the one generally held in modern society.

More recently, however, a few theorists, such as Julia Kristeva, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, and especially Henri Meschonnic and Charles Bernstein, have challenged this view of rhythm.[1] These theorists take their inspiration from an essay by the great pioneer linguist, Émile Benveniste, in which he reveals the fact that the Greek word *rhuthmos* had originally meant something quite

different.[2] Akin to the verb *rheō*, to flow, *rhythm* in its pre-Platonic sense denotes the shape (*schēma*) of a moving object such as the water of a stream or the body of a dancer. It is in the words of Socrates that this form or shape of a moving body is required to follow "measure" and order – in other words, to be metrical – so that in Plato the term occupies the exact point where the ancient and modern senses of the word overlap. After Plato, apparently, *rhythm* has meant increasingly what it means today. From the point of view of these post-Benveniste theorists, the conventional meaning of rhythm today is informed by *measure*, what Plato calls *metron*. These theorists wish to return us to the pre-Socratic sense, where, they believe, rhythm is closely bound up with subjectivity and discourse. In this essay, I shall be arguing *in favor of the conventional, modern* view of rhythm, but for unconventional reasons. For these two meanings of the word *rhythm* have more at stake than mere terminology.

The modern, conventional sense of rhythm, for example, may be connected to the Nietzschean concept of the Dionysian, in opposition to the Apollonian order, in his *The Birth of Tragedy*. While Apollo weaves the web of illusions that makes reason, normal perception, and subjectivity possible, Dionysos presides over ecstasy, the absence of the principle of individuation – the primal unity, or primal chaos, which is nonsubjective and thus transsubjective.[3] If we associate language in its meaningful, representational nature with Apollo, then rhythm, even the rhythm of language, is associated with the disruption of meaning, representation, subjectivity, coherency of image, and so forth – an avenue of return to the Dionysian. It is incorrect to think of either the Apollonian or, especially, the Dionysian as actual stable states of being. Rather, they are mutually dependent and determining allegories. But the stability of subjectivity can be dislodged, or rather the inherent instability foregrounded in experience, by means of a focus toward rhythm.[4]

The returned pre-Platonic meaning of rhythm moves in virtually the opposite direction. For Meschonnic, for example, the rhythm of a given passage of either poetry or prose – for him, neither can be either more or less rhythmic than the other – is an unquestionable marker of the distinctiveness of each writer and even each work. Every writer has a personal rhythm. Thus rhythm leads us precisely toward the subjective from which it leads away in the Nietzschean tradition, which uses the modern meaning of the term *rhythm*. For Meschonnic, rhythm *is* subjectivity in the written text. Whereas for Nietzsche, rhythm provides a break – a caesura – of thought in its individual subjectivity, for Meschonnic, following Benveniste, rhythm is continuous with history and thus with the subjectivity of thought.

To be more precise about Meschonnic, rhythm according to him is not a *sign* of the subject. How something can mark without being a sign, I don't know. When Meschonnic says "sign," he is referring to the analysis of signs given by Ferdinand de Saussure – a bound relation between a signifier and a signified – not the one given by the American C. S. Peirce, which has three parts and is subtler. Given the Saussurean semiology, Meschonnic regards the sign as oppressive, because it is intrinsically hierarchical in the relation between signifier and signified.[5] This strikes me as an instance of throwing the baby out with the bath-water, to say the least. Nevertheless, in my terms, Meschonnic may be

right about how individuality is expressed through rhythm, but only because, as I have mentioned earlier, the modern, conventional definition of rhythm actually embraces three strata of rhythm. Meschonnic is concerned with the surface stratum, without attending to the fact that this expressive sound-process always refers back to the regular beat against which it must be felt.

Meschonnic takes his start by arguing that the modern, conventional (Western) definition of rhythm is ethnocentric and excludes, say, Hebrew biblical poetry, which is neither verse nor prose. The matter of biblical poetry is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this essay.[6] Let me only point out, however, that the Psalms are assumed to have been sung or chanted and give internal evidence of being accompanied with instruments. Their melodic traditions, alas, are lost to us. If I may be allowed the comparison, the printed lyrics of modern raps, often would give little or no evidence of meter. When a text is composed to be performed orally to music, a vast variety of subdivisions of the beat and other effects can nevertheless realize the beat convincingly. What we usually call *metrical poetry* is a small subclass of rhythmic verbal art – that is, it is poetry in which the words alone, without musical accompaniment, and when uttered according to standard rules, are sufficient to realize the beat and may be recognized easily as regularly rhythmic.

To return to the general phenomenon of the recent trend of citing Benveniste as Meschonnic and others do, there are several ironies here. The first is that the very recourse to the pre-Platonic or pre-Socratic as a rediscovery of truth beyond the confines of Western illusions is a classically Heideggerian move. Heidegger's project is, in large part, to think the unthought in Western philosophy. *Thinking* in the Heideggerian sense can attend to what makes philosophy itself possible – just as pre-Socratic thought enables us to witness the unthought suppressed in philosophy from Plato on. Likewise, for Hölderlin, to whom Heidegger refers about as much as to the pre-Socratics, tragedy reveals the ground of representation at that climactic moment in which its *rhythm* is interrupted by the equivalent of the caesura in poetic meter. Indeed, whereas for Nietzsche rhythm (or music) itself affords a break in the subjectivity of thought, for Hölderlin, rhythm is the normality of the subject, and the caesura is the revelatory moment. Working across the analogy between Heidegger and Hölderlin, then, we may say that rhythm occupies the position of philosophy, while the caesura occupies the place of thinking the grounds of philosophy. But philosophy itself is still a kind of thinking. So the break in thinking is still thinking. There is nothing outside thought. What would be the unthought of thinking about the unthought?

Another irony is that the meanings of rhythm in the modern musical and general senses are *not* quite the same as they are in Plato. In addition, part of the general semantic shift should be traced to the shift in the way people have thought technically about music from antiquity to modernity. In ancient Greece, what we would call "rhythm" was inextricable from poetry, which for the Greeks was the same as music. Dance was also inseparable from this continuum. Theorizing about rhythm was thus the province of grammarians and rhetoric teachers, who could draw to one's attention the difference between

short and long syllables both in ordinary speech and in poetry, and could thus help train one in the science of prosody. An attempt in modern times to connect the shape of a moving being with subjectivity presupposes a conception of subjectivity which attends that very semantic shift over history. Thus the recourse to pre-Socratics via Benveniste is not a revelation of the repressed unthought in Western thinking about rhythm, but rather a rhetorical manipulation of history to bolster a modern artifact of concepts such as authorship, subjectivity, and the individual – concepts which are, after all and despite the poststructuralist questioning of them, still very much with us.

Finally, there is an irony about Plato's own use of the word. For if we keep in mind the original meaning of the term as Benveniste explains it, Plato actually recommends, in the *Republic*, that the form or energy-level (one possible translation) of music be in accordance with a certain typology which itself suggests the orderliness of the forms. The right music will induce the right character in the citizen. Thus, if we temporarily treat the ancient idea of character as similar to the modern idea of subjectivity, it is precisely *in Plato* that we first see the connection between *rhuthmos* and subjectivity – with the former producing the latter. Rhythm is not so much a sign of subjectivity, as it would be in Meschonnic, as subjectivity is a sign of rhythm. It makes sense, I think, to say that subjectivity is a sign of rhythm, but not necessarily in the way that Plato would suggest in the *Republic*. For if rhythms form character, as Plato observes, then who can be outside of that process enough to judge which are the proper rhythms to be used by the Republic to form good citizens? This is precisely the same problem of circularity with which we are familiar in terms of ideology and critique after Marx. But rhythm does come first in a completely different sense, as I hope we shall see later. In any event, none of the pre-Socratic sources whom Benveniste quotes suggest that rhythm is in any sense an expression of subjectivity or, for that matter, of anything else. It suggests no temporality – it is spatial form.

Aside from these paradoxes, the theoretical controversy, which may be seen as a recent attack on the notion of rhythm as musical or verse meter and thus of rhythm as a regular beat, brings to the surface a large-scale social problem. This problem may be seen initially with reference to modern pedagogy. Theorists such as Kristeva, Meschonnic, and Bernstein are still writing as if people were overtrained in conventional metrical poetry and as if they were liberating us from these archaic shackles. Of course, the assault on meter has been going on now for well over a century! Today, students come out of school, not in the condition of knowing meter too well and wanting to rebel against it, but of not knowing meter at all, and being taught that poetry is not metrical and is almost always a rebellion against meter. In other words, they know of a rebellion but not what the rebellion rebels against. They come out with the impression that poetry is the sincere expression of personal feelings in writing, especially if it is short and not developed as an argument. A diary jotting is in this view a poem. Since this absolutely conventional and thoroughly institutionalized view of poetry has been passed off as rebellion, it becomes nearly impossible to dissuade students of it. If you try to do so, then you are the authority against whom they have all along known that they must

rebel. For, although they don't know meter, they do know that meter is authority.

Yet meanwhile, their lives are full of poetry. This poetry has great power for them, and it is all *quite metrical*. When they are children, they have nursery rhymes and Dr. Seuss books. As adults, they have song lyrics and raps. People hear this poetry and they memorize it. And in the moments which Noam Chomsky rightly recognizes as the most democratic expressions in our society, public demonstrations, people chant to express their political will *in meter*. No one at those moments cries out that he or she is being tyrannized by the authority of meter. No one worries about his or her subjectivity or individuality, any more than would someone in the middle of a basketball game stop playing because the rules are not *his or her* rules. Meter is part of the game people wish to play. The saturation with poetry of people's lives, including their truly political lives, is not a sign of their weakness but of their strength. But this poetry generally does not come into the classroom.

When the teacher speaks of poetry, the students feel disempowered: I cannot understand poetry; poetry isn't for me. Their attitude toward poetry is remarkably analogous to the attitude of modern citizens toward democracy: I cannot understand the issues; they do not concern me; I have no power anyway. The teaching that removes rhythm from poetry *systematically prevents* people from being competent in poetry in much the same way as, in Chomsky's analysis, media systematically prevent people from truly engaging in democracy. We are telling our students: poetry is not about your body. Media are telling people: democracy is not about your issues. But of course, it's subtler: media make people think that the real issues are the "issues" they cover – face-lifts and divorces, football contracts and school prayer. Likewise, students come away thinking that what they have been taught has liberated them from some terrible authority – so that they are completely unconscious of the real, ubiquitous, and potentially deeply political role of poetry in their lives.

Our current failure to teach and speak of poetry in a way that makes sense of its role in politics and culture, then, has everything to do with the question of rhythm. And the current shift among certain thinkers towards a novel, but also supposedly pre-Socratic, redefinition of rhythm, though apparently coming out of a sincere desire for political liberation, ironically only repeats the very deafness to rhythm that lies at the core of this failure to maintain the connection between poetry and politics in a meaningful way. The "revolution" in thinking about rhythm does not seem to have taken into account the very powerful possibilities of the more conventional definition of rhythm to allow poetry to work politically – democratically.

To review: we seem to have two meanings to rhythm. On the one hand, in the conventional meaning, rhythm is a regular repetition. On the other hand, it is the "shape" or form of subjectivity in discourse, the way language sounds aside from its lexical meanings (Meschonnic). In the first instance, rhythm is a disruption of the principle of individuation and therefore of subjectivity (Nietzsche). In the second, rhythm is what enables a reader to identify the work of a particular author (Meschonnic). In this set of oppositions, between Nietzsche and Meschonnic, subjectivity itself is at issue: individuality,

although necessary, constrains freedom and clothes the truth with illusions for Nietzsche, whereas for Meschonnic, subjectivity seems to *be* the truth and to express freedom. As for Kristeva, both Nietzsche and Kristeva would agree that a momentary apprehension of freedom outside individual subjectivity is good (either because it is true or because it is "revolutionary"). But for Nietzsche, following the conventional view of rhythm, rhythm disrupts individuation insofar as it is *rhythmic* – that is, musical, regular; whereas for Kristeva, rhythm disrupts subjectivity most when it is least metrical or when meter can be most ignored. Although Kristeva and Meschonnic clearly differ about the value of subjectivity in poetry, they fundamentally agree that rhythm is most real when it is not regular; whereas Nietzsche's theory seems to work best when by "rhythm" we mean what we mean in ordinary conversation – that is, something referring to a regular beat. The contradiction between these two meanings of rhythm is not resolvable.

In some ways, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe may be thought of as trying to bridge the gap. He does this by having the two senses of rhythm, the one shaping and the other breaking thought, lead one into the other. Lacoue-Labarthe's approach provides a way of thinking the relation between rhythm and thinking in such a way that rhythm can be *both* the caesura of thought *and* the thought in the midst of which a caesura appears. After all, rhythm *is* both continuous and discontinuous. It is simultaneously a process and a regular interruption of a process. For example, the psychoanalyst Theodore Reik finds himself haunted by melodies at certain moments in his life – such as the moment he receives news of the death of his teacher, Freud's disciple Karl Abraham. He tries unsuccessfully for 25 years to come to an analytical understanding of this musical obsession. The melody that haunted Reik was a break in his thought – it came at the failure of theory; but it also was precisely what called up theory, what propelled him onward in discourse. It shaped the subject of the obsession by breaking the continuity of the subject (see *TR* 197–200).[7]

But although Lacoue-Labarthe brings us a step closer to understanding the effects of rhythm, his theories bring us no closer to understanding what rhythm actually is. Before the analysis of rhythm, rhythm is already there. Before subjectivity, rhythm is. Before the disruption of subjectivity, rhythm is. What is rhythm? It is a question worthy of Heidegger, and in his absence, we must imitate an echo of his rhythms.

To speak – as some theorists have done for the past century, including most recently Meschonnic and Bernstein – of expressive rhythms, of rhythms of ordinary speech, of rhythms of life – or for that matter, of rhythms of the calendar, of the seasons, of traffic, or even of ideas or of the soul – does have meaning. But these terms have meaning *only* because we already have some knowledge of rhythm. We would not speak of a "rhythm of life" unless we could bring to mind something that was truly and without a doubt rhythmic. Because we not only know rhythms but can produce rhythms at any time, we are able to see absolutely anything in life in relation to these rhythms and therefore as, in effect, rhythmic.

Certain things we know are rhythmic. Music, dance, and traditional poetry (which might be sung to music and even danced to) are rhythmic. Children's

jumping rope while chanting a rhyme is rhythmic, as is their clapping of hands in a game of pat-a-cake. Some of our exercises are rhythmic: running, swimming, pedalling a bicycle, lifting weights in sets of reps, bouncing a basketball on a resounding floor. Work may be rhythmic, too. Older forms of work were thoroughly rhythmic and often accompanied by song: the tilling of fields with a hoe or a pickaxe, the moving of earth with a shovel; the sowing, reaping, hauling on foot, and winnowing of grain; the kneading of bread; the spinning of yarn and the weaving of cloth on a hand-loom with its rebounding shuttle; sweeping floors and shaking out rugs; nailing boards to build a house; the marching of soldiers. The older forms of industry also involve rhythms, although perhaps more deadening ones: the repetitive addition of a single part in a factory assembly-line; the repetitive banging, whirring, humming, pounding, screaming, or crashing of machinery. These rhythms do not give rise to song, but lull workers into a dangerous sleep so that they might be crushed by the machines.

It should hardly be a surprise, then, that poets abandon rhythm beginning around the middle of the nineteenth century, when these deadly rhythms have become so prominent, nor that poets and thinkers should begin to think of rhythm as somehow monotonous, constraining, or oppressive. Our work today is freed of rhythm. Typing a keyboard, answering the phone, making plans, meeting clients – these activities are not accompanied by song, they require thought and attention to the unpredictable changes which they provoke. Meanwhile, rhythm has never disappeared. How could it? Rhythm has shifted from the entire world of work and play to the specialized world of play alone. But since poetry has become a profession and thinking can only be justified if it serves industry, poetry has remained in the world of work rather than that of play, and thinking has brought us to where we are now – where, unsure of what we should know, we must ask the very question: What is rhythm?

Let us go into the realm of play, where we are certain to encounter rhythm. We enter a room full of people dancing to music that is perhaps only slightly too loud. It is important that we have come here to think about rhythm. Because the more people talk strangely about "the rhythms of prose" or "the rhythm of life" or "a new and irregular rhythm" or "the rhythm of subjectivity," the more they *already know* what rhythm is – and it is, in fact, what we find when we enter this room with people dancing. That is how we know what rhythm means. No one will ever understand the phrase "prose rhythms" unless he or she has witnessed something like this room. We have entered the room. We can see that they are dancing, even though each one of them is doing something different. Some of them are moving in subtly different ways and are watching each other. Most are moving in drastically different ways and are not watching each other. Yet we can see, not only that they are all dancing, but that they are dancing to the same beat. Their bodies are making different rhythms, but they are also participating in the same rhythm. They are engaging in rhythm together. This is clearly true, but it is also quite paradoxical.

We say "participating" or "engaging" in rhythm. Are they the receivers of rhythm? No doubt – they must hear (or feel, even if they are deaf) the rhythm of the music to which they are dancing. But they are also the givers, the

producers of rhythm. Which are they first, receivers or givers of rhythm? At the moment that they are dancing, it is impossible to tell. The receiving is a giving, the giving a receiving.

While they are dancing to the same rhythm, engaging in the same rhythm, their behavior is social. We all know that dancing is a social occasion. But this does not mean that they agree with each other, or even that they are communicating with each other in any meaningful way. They may be dancing quite by themselves — and yet, insofar as they are dancing to the same beat, they are social. Their sociality is not a unity. It is also not a communication.

The people dancing share their dancing and share the rhythm to which they dance. Their dancing *is* a sharing, even if they are dancing without partners, and even if they are dancing off by themselves. But their sharing is not an exchange of what each has to give as his or her individual gift to an individual other. There is no exchange of gifts. If there were, there would be indebtedness.

We don't know what these people think. Insofar as there are many and that people generally do not think alike, we assume that they would disagree about many things if they were talking with each other instead of dancing here. But they clearly agree about what the beat of the music is. In fact, they may disagree about virtually every other thing, but they agree about the rhythm. But this is in part because they are not here to discuss the beat or to arrive by investigation, analysis, and negotiation at a consensus of what the beat is. That would certainly not be dancing! As we have already noted, every body may be moving differently, and yet they all are dancing to the same beat. If asked, every one will know this, although, while answering, every dancer may momentarily fall out of the beat in order to think about it and answer our question. The dancers are dancing now. They know that their dancing is to the same beat, so long as they don't have to think too much about it.

Doubtless, rhythm goes on in time. Music, dance, traditional poetry, older forms of work, and newer forms of play are rhythmic and they all unfold in time. In this, are they not unlike the images of painting, photography, sculpture, and architecture? But these, too, unfold in time. To study an image takes time. How does one experience a building? As one passes one's eyes along a colonnade, descends a staircase, or rises in an elevator, as one walks slowly and deliberately through a lobby, noticing the pillars at regular intervals or the patterns of tiles on the floor or ceiling, one is obviously engaging in the rhythm which the building has to offer.

But if architecture is rhythmic, it is also spatial and still. In this, is architecture not unlike music and dance, which are never still but always moving? But the rhythm of music and dance also bring about a stillness as well. Although the body of the dancer moves in time, the beat remains the same. What does it mean to say that the beat remains "the same"? The anticipation of the beat, which stands in a stillness before us, matches the memory of the beat, which stands in a stillness around us, beneath us. It is only if, say, the tempo momentarily changes that the stillness is momentarily disrupted. Even if such a tempo forms part of a larger pattern that can be anticipated, then we return to stillness. Rhythm allows us to move with great energy but to remain still and serene all the while.

Neither the stillness nor the movement inherent in rhythm are attributes of measure. We may describe rhythm by measuring it – by counting or by drawing a graph or a musical score, for example. In these graphs, a horizontal axis will represent time. But insofar as these measures reveal the regularity of rhythm, that of the underlying beat, they do so only because we are standing outside rhythm. The energetic stillness of rhythm is exchanged for the cumulative movement of counting and of acquiring knowledge. Measure is not rhythm, but a representation of rhythm. These forms of measure are good representations, however. When we read them right, we see the rhythm inherent in them just as we saw the rhythm in the building by walking through it. In this process, our reading of the time line becomes the movement of anticipation and memory, and the stillness of the graph matches the stillness of the matching of the time before us and the time beneath us. But it is because some theorists think that traditional poems are merely *in measure* that they can view their rhythm as a constraint. They see meter as an aspect of style, whereas in fact it is an aspect of writing that conceals the rhythmicity of poetry but that simultaneously reveals it in all its paradoxes in the act of reading.

Between the anticipation of the beat and the memory of its fulfillment, there opens a space – the Heideggerian space in which Being is disclosed. This is also a Nietzschean space, in which "I" am not "myself," because there is nothing there. Hence, it is a place of freedom. Paradoxically, the regularity of the beat underlying all rhythms that modern theorists confuse with the mere imposition of rules is precisely what affords this freedom from any determinism – because there is no object of determination. Yet I am still myself insofar as I am allowing the beat to take hold of me; no one and nothing is forcing me.

Insofar as the beat is a rule, moreover, it is a rule which we follow willingly and gladly. If we didn't, we could not dance! One doesn't worry about whether dancing to the same beat as others diminishes one's individual will. One dances because one is tired of the burdens of individual will, tired of discovering the intricate ways in which it is really the mask of a compulsion, and one wishes to be free. That is why one goes to dance after work. To dance is not to obey a mob but to agree to play.

In many ways, what one finds on the dance-floor is the model of democracy – or better, of anarchy, which is the principle of democracy put into workable practice in its most radical form. Anarchy is the absence of a ruler, not the absence of rules. The rules are subject to agreement from moment to moment – the rules of a truly playful game. Even constitutional republics, let alone some tyrannies, only pretend to have the willful participation of the people. Democracy and anarchy are not answers to the political problem of justice but questions. What is democracy? What is freedom? When are we free? If we freely go to the polls to elect unanimously the sole candidate who had sufficient cash to advertise constant attacks on his rivals, and if even his rivals were only those who had sufficient cash to pose as rivals, then are we free, and is this a democracy? To learn more about democracy, we turn to the rhythms of the dance-floor. At the core of rhythm is freedom, but there is no will, since there is no subject of will. How can we speak of democracy if people are merely dancing? Is this not a mystical cult of surrender?

Bodies express the rhythm. Each body expresses the rhythm differently. We say: She is expressing herself through dance. We put it this way because we think that the self comes first – but that is precisely what keeps us from ever hearing the beat or dancing to it. Perhaps it would be more correct to say: Dance is expressing itself as her; or: She becomes herself as she dances. It is because we can point to her and say "Yes, that is the way she dances" that we may become confused into thinking that rhythm is what enables us to distinguish individuals by witnessing the mark of their subjectivity. This confusion arises because rhythm, as I said in the beginning, refers to several things. These things (three) may be reduced to two: a regular alternation of event and nonevent and the realization of this regularity-as-rule through an irregularity. We call the irregular realization of the beat "rhythm" because we refer it back to the beat, because we treat it as something which conceals the beat but which also enables us to witness its revelation. Because of this relationship, it would be possible hypothetically to call *anything whatsoever* rhythmic, since we are always capable not only of engaging in a beat but in producing one to serve to make the world rhythmic. Nowadays, we sometimes need to exert this effort because freedom has become a crucial question.

If the expression of rhythm takes the form of images, and these images are told in words, and these words, in turn, are the manifestation of the beat, then the beat does not express feelings or ideas, but rather the images and propositions express rhythm. This is poetry. Poetry enables us to witness the movement from rhythm to meaning as dance bears witness to the movement from rhythm to the subjective individuality of the body. But in both cases, the representation of rhythm in the nonrhythmic field constantly refers back to the rhythmic and nonrepresentational. Poetry does this through allegory. Poetry's images allegorize the sublime power of rhythm as it poses a challenge to language, and they also allegorize the impossibility of this representation of something so heterogeneous to representation as rhythm. In this regard, Lacoue-Labarthe is right that rhythm both shapes and breaks thought. But rhythm is the caesura of thought, as in poetry, precisely because rhythm goes on. A caesura in poetry only strengthens our anticipation of the rhythm that will return both to give forth and to disrupt the play of meaning in imagery. Poetry then does what all knowledge, including scientific knowledge, does: it makes sense of a world by representing it, but contains within it the signs that the world is not representation and thus cannot allow a representation to be found that is perfectly commensurate with it. The failure of knowledge is also its success, because it is what enables us to be free.

Neither poetry nor knowledge could possibly be without both this success and this failure. We could not possibly do without these, for they are what we are: expressions of what happens in a space of freedom as rhythm. One may say that the thoughts expressed in this very essay bear an analogous relationship to the truth, both revealing and falling short. And, as it happens, parts of the essay may appear rhythmic – to realize a beat. But this essay is not poetry. For us to learn more about the relation between the physical power of rhythm and the constructive effort of language, we must turn to poetry itself.

12

MOUSIKĒ TECHNĒ

THE PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE OF MUSIC IN PLATO, NIETZSCHE, AND HEIDEGGER

Babette E. Babich

> An einem schönen Tage läßt sich ja fast jede Sangart hören, und
> die Natur, wovon es her ist, nimmts auch wieder.
>
> Viel hat von Morgen an,
> Seit ein Gespräch wir sind und hören voneinander,
> Erfahren der Mensch; bald sind wir aber Gesang.
> > Friedrich Hölderlin, *Friedensfeier*

TOWARDS A MUSICAL PRAXIS IN PHILOSOPHY: PLAYING TEMPERAMENT AND THOUGHT

> The Muses and music in general are named . . . from *mōsthai*,
> searching, and philosophy.
> > Plato, *Cratylus* 406 a

In the broad historical provenance of the conception of the "practice of music," *mousikē technē*, ancient Greek culture includes philosophy.[1] Thus and traditionally, Heraclitus invokes the greater merits of the hidden attunement, or the backstretched connection that is the secret of harmonious variance. For Pythagoras, both mathematics and philosophy are born from the structural nature of music. And with the regulative measure following from an understanding of the political/ethical effects of musical tuning, Plato builds an ideal musical city founded on the same well-tempered measure and, in a similar fashion, Aristotle invokes the ethical ideal of musical harmony (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1131 a–1134 b).

In this essay, I retrace the broad definition of music in antiquity to justify the sense in which one may speak of the music of philosophy. And to articulate the practice of philosophy as such a music, I recall Socrates' own account of the

contest between the highest music (philosophy) and the lowest kind of music (rhymed and hymned), along with a musical reading of Nietzsche's aphoristic style, and I briefly review Heidegger's thought in its more serialist than paratactic musical dynamic.

<div align="center">THE ORIGIN OF MUSIC</div>

Mousikē, according to Liddell and Scott, is defined as "*any art over which the Muses presided*, esp. *music or lyric poetry*."[2] For Homer, the art of the Muse (Mousa, Moisa, Mosa) embraced the broadest range of the fine arts as eloquence or cultivation in general. And to be *mousomai*, for Pericles, meant to be educated or cultured. Thus the appellation musical (*mousikos*) would characterize one "skilled in music" but also "generally, *a votary of the Muses, a man of letters and accomplishment, a scholar*" (*L&S*).[3]

For Thrasybulos Georgiades, the term *Musik*, at the same time as it reflects the resources of the Greek mind intrinsically linked to this same broad musicality, also expressed the *Eigenart* or essence of each work in particular. It is for this reason that Georgiades emphasizes that in its grammatical form, *Musik* is not substantive but primordially or prototypically adjectival, corresponding to the muses: "*Es bedeutet <musisch>, <auf die Musen bezogen>*."[4] Because music articulates itself as an activity in play, music in its very primordial essence can never be a finished, objective, or given work. Accordingly, a "musical education" is only dynamically possible "through musical activity."[5] This active dimensionality reflects the unique character of the Greek language.

For Georgiades, an intrinsically Western perspective "presupposes the field of tension which formed between the word and art, between language and music. The *mousikē* of antiquity . . . does not recognize this distinction" (*ML*, 134).[6] There is thus an incompatibility between the ancient conception of music and our contemporary understanding of music, which like art, refers to a world *apart from* the everyday.[7] Because, according to Georgiades, art and truth formed "an indissoluble unit" for the ancient Greek, it is misleading to translate, *mousikē*, "simply as music" and it "cannot even be termed 'art' in our sense" (*ML*, 134). Thus rigorously defined, even the semi-Whiggish Warren Anderson concurs that the modern word, music, should not be used "to render *mousikē*. The Greek term designates here the oral training in poetry – sung to lyre accompaniment or recited without it – that had for so long been the means of transmitting the values and precepts of Greek culture (*M*, 143).

As *mousikē* is only partly equivalent to the contemporary conception of music, our tendency to reduce music to the "organized" art of sound obscures the equiprimordial sense in which *Musik* is the quintessence or enabling element of intellectual or spiritual education and in which *Musik* figures as the determining force of both individual and societal character or ethos. It works as such because of the essentially, literally musical difference Georgiades constantly emphasizes between the language of archaic Greece and contemporary Western languages. The fundamental musicality of antique Greek resides in the tonic interval of fixed time: long or short, that is also what Georgiades names its static character (its *masked* dimension, paralleling the fixed expression

of the masks of ancient Greek theater). The very inflexibility or rigor of archaic Greek compels the speaker/hearer's active or ethical engagement. If the "Western verse line is not a musical but rather a linguistic form," the musical-rhythmic structure of the ancient Greek verse line, by contrast, reflected the music of the language: "The ancient Greek word comprised within itself a firm musical component. It had an intrinsic musical will." Because "individual syllables could be neither extended nor abbreviated" (*ML*, 4–5), the Greek language was expressed in consummate, completed time. "The rhythmic principle of antiquity is based not on the distinction between the organization of time (the measure, system of accents) and its filling in (with various note values) but rather on intrinsically filled-in time" (*ML*, 4–5). For this reason, music was indistinguishable from speech. Yet because of this inextricably compound character, *mousikē* had enormous edificatory powers. The speaking subject was engaged not only as a speaker but always also as active listener. Because of this doubly aspected engagement of atttentive articulation, ancient Greek presupposed a community and possessed a community-building power nearly impossible to imagine today. For Georgiades, this implies a fundamental ethic of responsibility which dares him to claim that the effect of a Hitler would have been impossible in Ancient Greece (*MR*, 48).[8] But only the pristine resonance of the linguistic constitution of ancient Greek *mousikē* can ensure discrimination at such an ethical height. After song has been sundered, emptying its spirit in the written text, rendered as (distinct) prose and (distinguishable) poetry/music, there is no philosophy (not even Levinas's, perhaps especially not Levinas's) that can be proof against such use/abuse. The development of prose out of music separates music and text – it is no accident that this begins with the institution of writing whereby the text is liberated from its originally musical expression in the full measure of time.[9] I shall argue that today we need to restore the music of thought by a deliberate attunement. If what was once inherently resonant in the original language of philosophy has been silenced by the letter, the obscured possibility of resonant, responsive thinking may yet admit recollection.

PHILOSOPHY AS HIGHEST MUSIC: THE TECHNICAL CASE OF SOCRATES

Pythagoras' esoteric, exactly allopathic, conception of a musical harmony between world and soul renders music the soul of philosophy.[10] In his *Republic*, Plato agreed with traditional wisdom concerning the consequences of any changes to the musical modulation of the state: "when the modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the state always change with them."[11] Where writing (just because it is writing) underlines what is no longer a universal practice,[12] Plato's expression of philosophy as a kind of music invokes a very traditional conception of music. As the love of wisdom or theory, philosophy installs itself precisely in the place of music as the highest or noblest kind of music. And it is in this same correspondent, musical company that the idea of the musical practice or ethos of philosophy is more than a matter of metaphor.

In apparent tension with the negative judgment on music rendered by the *Republic*, the question of the right relation between music and philosophy is addressed in the *Phaedo*, which is also the question of the primacy of philosophy

over poetry or music. The ethos of music represented both the very Pythagorean possibility of harmonious resonance of soul and world as well as, and especially in its more popular modes, posing the most effective threat to the rational dominion of the soul. Music in its breadth could be regarded as constituting a vital danger to philosophy (as the highest music beyond popular music and poetry) and consequently, music threatened the singularly ethical dominion of philosophy as the project of conceiving and living a well-ordered or examined or good life. As the greatest of erotics, in Nietzsche's words, an ironic Socrates left the world nothing but music without a text, and called philosophy the highest music in a teasing gesture that inevitably alienates and embitters the rest of music.[13]

Socrates, the amateur sleuth of the good, pretending incompetence and distraction as a ruse to convert (convict) his interlocutors (on the model of television's "Lt. Columbo"), was notoriously fond of seemingly vulgar and simple allusions and oaths, as well as banausic and pedestrian examples. We all know that the immortality of the soul is the theme of the *Phaedo*, where Socrates recounts his eleventh hour musical excercises. Soul or not: the dialogue is all about the body – beginning (and ending) with strikingly graphic references and physical descriptions. The pathos of the body includes pain and feeling, especially erotic feeling. Thus the dialogue begins with Socrates sending away his wife, to spare himself (we are told) the unseemly sounds of her anguish. Scholars are quick to advert to the typically ironic foreshadowing of the later lamentation of Socrates' manly disciples at the dialogue's conclusion, ignoring the relevant detail of Xanthipppe's tacitly intimate support of his last earthly night (the dialogue begins with his male friends waiting impatiently for morning light for his jailors to permit entry).[14] In the same bodily context (and it is the same metaphor within a Platonic context), Socrates' fetters are loosened and Plato offers us the sight of Socrates rubbing his legs (a dissonantly homely image, not unlike the paradoxical picture of Heraclitus surprised by his admirers with his back to the kitchen stove). Socrates here remarks on the very Greek tension between pain and pleasure, and this resonantly erotic detail, by analogy, is likened to the death that is to come. We need not add that we are further offered so many details of Socrates' death that it is possible to reconstruct the ancient aetiological understanding of herbal pharmaceuticals, nor need we advert to the typically scholarly blush that awaits any reference to the precise place where the poison rises to call forth Socrates' last words referring to a rooster as a debt for healing.

In this confessional context, Socrates reports that all his life he was persistently visited with the same unusual dream figure, repeatedly uttering an imperative caution. The oneiric warning never varied: "make music" (*Phaedo* 61 a).[15] Throughout his life Socrates had always assumed that because philosophy itself represented the apex or culmination (*phlosofías men ousēs megistēs mousikēs*) of the musical arts (61 a), he had always already been in compliance with the dream's command, dedicated as he was to philosophy. But the recurrence of the dream remained perplexing and the circumstance of his death sentence brought him to rethink his life-long interpretation of philosophy as music in the highest sense. And in an ironic gesture of superstitious

appeasement that does not accidentally recall the pious preoccupations of Cephalus in the *Republic* – the same place where Plato subjects music to the most stringent regulations – Socrates says that he casually turned to practice "music in the commonly accepted sense": composing a hymn of praise to Apollo together with a few common verses (construed from Aesop's fables).[16] As the parallel with the *Republic* suggests, it is not difficult to extend this observation of Socrates' very musical achievement to the composition of the dialogue as playing "the song itself."[17]

To take the Socrates of Plato's *Phaedo* at his word is to invert the order of indebtedness which is the pattern of its final irony. There is no challenge to the conception of philosophy as the highest music in the ultimate recourse to everyday musical kinds. Indeed, the point of the conclusion is reinforced by the lyre lessons West tells us Socrates takes at the end of his life, because as West also tells us, like champagne to us, for the Greek, "Music is constantly associated with celebration" (*AGM*, 14).[18] Given the Platonic representation of the body as the prisonhouse of the soul, Socrates' causal reflection on the relation between pain and pleasure at the moment of his preliminary liberation from his fetters at the start of the dialogue foreshadows the ultimate Platonic ideal of liberation from the illusions of earthly life. And we find a similar parallel between the vulgar practice of music, sacrificed by way of expiation to the healer god, Apollo, the dream god or the leader of the Muses, *Mousēgetēs*,[19] and the rooster Socrates asks Crito to sacrifice to the vulgar or people's god of healing, Asklepius.[20]

Confessing a vain conviction in precise accord with Greek tradition, Socrates appeals to the popular practice of music. Thereby he exploits an exoteric image for the sake of his most consistent account of the priority of soul or pure form over body or sullying matter. But if we have learnt nothing else from Freud, it is the secret of the secret as confessed or betrayed in such an overtly provocative manner. And we wait for the second master of suspicion to hear Nietzsche wondering about the character of a Socrates who might have lived a life not dedicated to philosophy as the highest music but to the breadth of music as such.

THE THINKER'S CONCINNITY: NIETZSCHEAN DISCRIMINATION AND RESONANCE

Nietzsche may well be the philosopher most often associated with music.[21] Indeed, we are told that Nietzsche's entire life was caught up within or captivated (*umgreift*) by music.[22] But this musical connnection differs from the interpretations of Nietzsche as a nihilist or metaphysician, or the college-level mistake of reading him as an "existentialist," if only because it is not an "interpretation." From the start, Nietzsche himself insists on reading his writing as music. But to say that this is Nietzsche's own dictation does not make its significance clear. How should we read Nietzsche's advice, for example, to count *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's major work as popularly received, *exactly* as music? How do we begin to parse this un-book as a book of parables, modeled, as we are instructed by so many commentators, on the gospels? Are

the gospels a kind of music too, or, more dangerously ironic than Socrates' Aesop, has Nietzsche merely set the New Testament in (all-too-free) verse? To give the question of the self-declared musicality of Nietzsche's texts another edge, how do we read Nietzsche's claim in his self-criticism of his first book, as this descriptive assertion could catch the exactly poetic sensibilities of Stefan George: "it should have *sung*, this 'new soul' – and not spoken!"[23]

To answer these questions I have elsewhere had recourse to a borrowed metaphor, in the somewhat conceptually dissonant term, *concinnity*. I take the term in its very harmonic musical sense, largely affine to the sense of the Latin *concinnitas* as rhythmically attuned diction. It is concinnity that resounds in the well-rounded or happy phrase. The architectural sense belongs to or is part of the originally rhetorical term employed by Cicero and Seneca to indicate the successful musicality of expression.[24] But where one may speak of music as liquid architecture and where Nietzsche insisted on architectural resonances to describe his definition of the *grand style*, the term concinnity as I employ it, recalls its own traditionally architectural meaning in addition to its rhetorically musical sense.[25] This properly architectural significance originates with Alberti's definition of concinnity as the coordinate harmonization of naturally divergent or contrasting parts.[26]

The need for such musicality in reading (and thought) is not figurative (or allegorical and so able to be conceived as an isolated interpretive turn) but a firstly literal (that is, textually explicit) and indeed ultimately tropologically (anagogically) fundamental prerequisite for a triadic resonant hermeneutic of the aphorism written, as Nietzsche writes, and he declares that he writes, in a reader-ironizing counterpoint. And on Nietzsche's author's or compositional side, such a musical or aphoristic style supports or enables an account of the world without truth, without event, without remainder.[27] Yet most immediately relevant because most pernicious is that this same musicality leaves his text (deliberately) liable to misunderstanding through simplistic or short-sighted or flattened and consequently inadequate readings. Mis- or short readings exemplify the connection between the aesthetic nihilism that inheres in the pathos of truth and the interpretive truth of truth, the truth of illusion, or the truth of the world as will to power.[28]

The elusiveness of Nietzsche's style derives from the specifically Heraclitean – and intrinsically musical – tension of his aphorisms. By virtue of this literally compositional tension, the aphorism can – and must – be read against itself. In other words, the music of Nietzsche's aphoristically composed text inevitably plays upon both sides of the listening/reading dynamic. The advantage of what I call "musical" reading is patently useful for the interpretation of any aphorism or any rhyme, or any joke – but such musicality may not be dispensed with in the case of Nietzsche's aphorisms. Falling short of the aphorism's music, the prosaic reader, deaf to the resonance of the text, like Socrates' uncomprehending vision of the music of tragedy, not only fails to "get it" as we say, but as a failure unawares, such an error is effectively incorrigible.

This does not mean that Nietzsche will not be understood: it turns out that it is no kind of philosophic achievement to "get" a sense of Nietzsche's meaning, in contrast, say, with Kant. Despite his hyperbolic anxiety regarding his post-

humous reception, it would seem a simple matter to understand or read Nietzsche. Every Nietzschean aphorism has always at least two points, if not indeed more. This characteristically Nietzschean excess permits most readers to come away with at least a partial notion of the text. This means that Nietzsche's esotericism is inclusive rather than exclusive and such an esoteric style is articulated by means of the aphorism which, precisely in its musical expression, is effectively able to distinguish readers and readings on the reader's part.

The musical dimensionality of Nietzsche's aphoristic style is able to instigate an ironic reversal or provocative inversion of best intentions (this is the reflective core of esoteric Protestantism). Thus, for example, bristling in a forest of related aphorisms in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche warns "Anyone who fights with monsters should take care that he does not in the process become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes back into you."[29] Without hearing its resonantly rhetorical "English," without a specifically attuned or "musical" reading, the reader may catch Nietzsche's reference to monsters and the danger of the abyss while missing his emphatic melancholy. Taking Nietzsche's words flatly or atomistically, as logically ranged terms and not as the reticulated elements of a provocatively framed aphorism, obscures their inherent backwards (and rhythmically musical) reflex. And it is no accident that a number of readers offer interpretations assuming that the monstrosity of the abyss is a specific or accidental and hence avoidable enemy and that the point of the statement is tactical avoidance rather than a caution confessing the inevitable entanglement of engaging corruption or evil. The threat of the abyss thus becomes yet another threat to modernity, a thing to be banished with the light, like a monster lurking in the closet, or a fault to be paved or smoothed over with the landfill of "values."[30] But for Nietzsche – and this is the Kantian dimension that would most intrigue Heidegger – the knower's confrontation with the abyss inevitably admits the abyss in the knower. All engagement is relational. Like the backwards and forwards relationality of Nietzsche's reconstruction of the human subject poised by rather than merely posing the object of judgment, there is a coordinating movement inherent in the progress of verse and music. Correspondingly, and this is important, a musical reading is impossible unless the reader holds with – as one must when listening to (reading) a poem or a piece of music – the beginning through to the end.

A similar interpretive dynamic accounts for the typically flattened reading of the warrior's maxim listed at the start of *Twilight of the Idols*: "From the military school of life," and which continues "– What does not kill me makes me stronger."[31] Here, the prose or routine reading overshoots the emphatic prelude as context: one reads Nietzsche's contention as literal, literally prosaic truism. Nietzsche, one takes it, says the same thing as any military or personal sports trainer might say: what doesn't kill one, makes one stronger. This too includes a challenge against the declaration. And the title of the maxim, the one for whom such a personal rule might be supposed, offers a backwards echo: from such a perspective on strength and intensification, but also compulsion, blind loyalty, and humiliation, it is said, and said from within a military mode, that what doesn't do one in, leaves one better off or makes one stronger. Or so the

tired veteran hears the tale told from Pericles' Athens to Lincoln's Gettysburg and still today in everyman's army. Nor is it untrue as such, rather it is only and exactly half true, just as to be half-dead is also to be half-alive. On matters military, Archilochus reclining on his spear to drink – in a dialectic reflection poised with this very posture – muses on the attunement of two truths held in balance. For the first: "Some Saian sports my splendid shield: / I had to leave it in a wood, / but saved my skin. Well I don't care – / I'll get another just as good."[32] What is then usually rendered in helpful translation as living to fight another day, promises another kind of restitution or payback. The more suitable "leaving-present"[33] Archilochus threatens for his future return can only be dealt from a mercenary's perspective – beyond the "military school of life."[34] Nietzsche's *Kriegschule des Lebens* captures the brutality of the training ground from the precise advantage of an irony that goes beyond it. This is what Hollywood's soldier means by the promise: "I'll be back."

Taking up the musical sense of the aphorism keeps both its subject matter and its development as parts of a whole. Thus positions, statements at variance with one another are not simple contra*dictions* but contra*puntal* (the terminological contrast need not be taken literally but can be read metaphorically here, as "music"), balanced exactly in their opposition in the backstretched connection Heraclitus long ago compared to that found in the (philosophic) bow of life and the (musical) lyre.[35]

Nietzsche named music the intimation that perhaps the solution to the suffering of existence was not its redemption (religion) or alleviation (modern science) but its intensification, in the *Rausch*, the intoxicated play of the Dionysian, standing as the frozen music of the grand style, a name for a life ventured or vaulted in time. Like other musicians, Nietzsche called it joy. Nietzsche's project for a different, unequal philosophy of fighting with monsters, the abyss, or the military school of science, as a philosophy of art and life recalls the promise made by the dying Socrates to himself: to practice music. What music is, what architecture, what life turned through art and desire upon itself in time names is never will to power but rather: eternal return.

THE CASE FOR HEIDEGGER'S MUSICAL STYLE: BLESSING MUSES[36]

If I argue that a musical concinnity (that is: reading with one's ears, where the notion of resonant reading, like the labyrinth of stomachs and intestines of Nietzsche's bovine metaphor of *rumination*, recalls in a purely metonymic parallel the whorls of the outer and inner ear)[37] is indispensable for a reading of Nietzsche as philosopher, a philosophical reading of the Heidegger who links poetry with thinking must be no less musically accented. A musical attunement is required to read the Heidegger who took continual pains – to our no less enduring annoyance – to remind us that we are "still not thinking." Where Heidegger invokes the nearness of thinking and poetry, the saying or ringing of the same that is said in silence is the inherently musical silence of Heidegger's favorite emphasis: the caesura. And this is the key to the musical serialism of Heidegger's style. Such a musical reading may enable us to go beyond both the

seductive resonance of Heidegger's text (as George Steiner characterizes its esoteric dimension, following Löwith and Arendt) as well as its well-publicized cognitive opacity.[38]

To sketch this with an abbreviated illustration, the later lecture course *Was heißt Denken?* not only offers an acoustic resonance in the German of the title – an allusiveness which cannot be heard in the English, *What Is Called Thinking?* – but exemplifies the work's stylistic advance. It also turns reflexively on a reading of Nietzsche, where Heidegger writes (in a fashion which would inspire Derrida's stylistic appropriation of the same trope in *Spurs*), "We ask: what is called thinking – and we talk about Nietzsche."[39]

Beyond what Heidegger names "one-track [or academic] thinking," Heidegger's strategy in his style of writing is sustainedly paedagogical: he provokes as the effect of a deliberate shock, as a claim dropped contrary to expectations, running against the grain of ordinary academic discourse and philosophic expectations. This strategy famously backfires (it leads to frustration at one extreme, and violent denunciation at another) but I argue that it can also teach the forbearance necessary for poetic renunciation or thoughtful attention. The three point strategy (provocation, intensification, return) works against what Heidegger regards as the ordinary tendency of scholarly thickness: one-sidedly dogmatic statements heard and perceived as such by thinkers locked into "one-track thinking" (*WhD*, 26). In this serially musical strategy, Heidegger does more than remind us that we need (as Nietzsche likewise emphasized that we need) to *learn* to think.[40]

Reflecting on the paratactic framing of Parmenides' gnomon – "needful: the saying also thinking too: being: to be," Heidegger illuminates this same ringing silence: "We call the word order of the saying paratactic in the widest sense. . . . For the saying *speaks* where there are no words, in the field between the words which the colons indicate" (*WhD*, 186). For Theodor Adorno, the same paratactic character captures the modern essence of a-tonal music as well as Hölderlin's poetry.[41] Adorno is far from Heidegger's defender but his suggestion offers us a way to approach a hearing of the rather more serial than paratactic spareness of Heidegger's reflection on the participial construction of "blossoming," taking blossoming together with flowing, being together to catch the mutual relation, the backwards/forwards *movement* of the participial form as musical. Once serialism is counted in place of the paratactic tact of Heidegger's reading of Parmenides, the answer to what is called thinking may be sounded forth: "Thinking means: letting-lie-before-us and so taking-to-heart also: beings in being" (*WhD*, 224). And so taking-to-heart also, also.

As an atonal tonality, a musical serialism in the philosophical text can teach us to interrupt our own always "already-knowing." In this interruption, we literally take a step back, turn to another beginning, and in this way, but only as a sheer and fading possibly, we may yet come to hear Heidegger's resonant word, as the *melos* of the appropriative event. "Saying" for Heidegger "is the mode in which Appropriation speaks" (*WhD*, 266). Saying speaks in every word, in silence, and most particularly as the event of Appropriation, as what catches us up, as *Ereignis*, in the *melos* of the song that in "saying speaks." Expressing the way in which we might be so appropriated as the *melos* of

Ereignis, "the melodic mode, the song which says something in the singing" is the frame of song, arraigned as what lets be, what "lauds," all present beings, allowing "them into their own, their nature" (*WhD*, 266). These are the words of song: "*das Lied das singend sagt*," sung between mortal experience and mortal converse when Hölderlin promises in his poem *Friedensfeier*: ". . . but soon we shall be song." ". . . *bald sind wir aber Gesang*."[42]

The music of philosophy is not a static achievement but a possibility of answering song or reflective resonance, that is also what Heidegger named thinking. For thought of this kind, we need less the promise of novelty (or the possibility of a consummation) than to learn to listen – for the possibility of harmony is the possibility of reticent or open attunement. This takes us back again to the musical ideal of Greek antiquity where no one speaks who does not also at the same time listen and where the key to ethical virtue is not the imperative of law but measure or fittedness – attuned to the music of the heart, the music of life, but above all attuned to the singular possibility of attunement itself: the backstretched connection.

Silence can be the kind of attunement in its ringing, its tolling knell or breath, that holds itself out, not sounding what it already knows but seeking an attending, listening word in reply. Such an attunement attends to language, nature itself, or indeed the very venture of philosophy. For to say "soon we shall be song" is to propose that we may yet come to hear what is said in what is sung, as the song of praise or wonder that is the sounding shock of wonder: the ringing silence or dazzled mien of philosophic thought broken open at its inception. The paradox is not the disappointment of a misappointment, if it is also that, but inheres in any insight into what is, any astonishment before being and in the face of the nature Heidegger spent a life trying to teach us not to go beyond.

It is music that invites one to think by hearing what is said both in the words and between the lines in the style of expression, attending to the unsaid in what is said at the end of philosophy. This music of thought is the reason one still speaks, however bemusedly, of the music of the heart or the echoing knell of sounding or attuned silence.[43] The ethical praxis of music in philosophy teaches the heart to listen, as Nietzsche says, by teaching it the same reticence that matters so much for Heidegger: allowing the impetuous heart that Plato despaired of holding, to stay, to dwell, to keep its peace, teaching the soul to hearken to the many voices on that day of perfect beauty on which, as Hölderlin writes, nearly every art of song may be heard.[44]

ABBREVIATIONS

A   Henry Adams, *Mont Saint Michel and Chârtres*. Ed. Ernest Samuels and Lyne N. Samuels. New York: Library of America, 1993.

AGM   M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.

BPF   Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture." In *Between Past and Future*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1977.

BRG   Irina Frowen, "Nietzsches Bedeutung für Rilkes frühe Kunstauffaßung." In *Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft*, 14 (1987).

BzP   Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe zur Politik*. Ed. Joachim W. Storck. Frankfurt: Insel, 1992.

C   Samuel Beckett, *Cascando and Other Short Pieces*. Trans. S. Beckett. New York: Grove Press, 1968.

CDR   Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. Trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith and ed. Jonathan Rée. London: NLB, 1976.

CI   Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf, 1993.

CM   Luce Irigaray, *La croyance même*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1983.

CoM   Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

DC   Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*. Trans. Thomas G. Bergin. New York: Meredith, 1955.

E/S   Jacques Derrida, *Éperons/Spurs*. Trans. Barbara Harlow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.

EB   *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Vol. 11. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1992.

EDS   Carlo Sini, *Etica della scrittura*. Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1992.

ESD   Luce Irigaray, *Éthique de la différence sexuelle*. Paris: Minuit, 1984; *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*. Trans C. Burke and G. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.

FS   Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System*. Trans. Matthew and Richard Howard. New York: Hill & Wang, 1983.

G   Roger Sherman Loomis, *The Grail: From Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991.

GA 19 Martin Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes*. Gesamtausugabe. Bd. 19. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1992; *Plato's Sophist*. Trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

GA 53 Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister."* Gesamtausgabe. Bd. 53 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1984; *Hölderlin's Hymn: "Der Ister."*

       Trans. W. McNeill & J. Davis. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

GS   Friederich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.

IT   Carlo Sini, *Images of Truth: From Sign to Symbol*. Trans. Massimo Verdicchio. Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993.

IV   Carlo Sini, *Immagini di verità: dal segno al simbolo*. Milan: Spirali Edizioni, 1985.

KA   Søren Kierkegaard, *A Kierkegaard Anthology*. Ed. Robert Bretall. New York: Modern Library, 1946.

KSA   Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*. Hrsg. G. Colli & M. Montinari. 15 Bde. Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1980, c. 1967–77.

L&S   Liddell and Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, Founded Upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889.

LaN   Régis Durand, *Lacan and Narration*. Ed. Robert Con Davis. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983.

LK   Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays of Philosophy and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

M   Warren D. Anderson, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Greece*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

MGR   Giovanni Comotti, *Music in Greek and Roman Culture*. Trans. Rosaria V. Munson. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977.

ML   Thrasybulos Georgiades, *Music and Language: The Rise of Western Music as Exemplified in the Settings of the Mass*. Trans. Marie Louise Göllner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

MM   J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

MR   Thrasybulos Georgiades, *Musik und Rhythmus bei den Griechen. Zum Ursprung der abendländischen Musik*. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958.

MW   Virginia Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall." In *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Susan Dick. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989.

NW   Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*. Ed. Karl Schlechta. Munich: Karl Hanser, 1966.

OA   Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

OG   Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967; *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Spivak. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974.

OPR   Paul Ricoeur, "Life in Quest of Narrative." In *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation*. London: Routledge, 1991.

P   Jacques Derrida, *Positions*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

PAR   Jacques Derrida, *Parages*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1987.

PI	Michèle Le Doeuff, *The Philosophical Imaginary*. London: Athlone, 1989.
PLT	Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. A. Hofstadter. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
PM	Martin Heidegger, *Pathmarks*. Ed. W. McNeill. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
PMC	Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
PP	Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.
PPh	Jacques Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy." In *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
PSY	Jacques Derrida, *Psyche. Inventions de l'autre*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1987.
RB	Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe*. Ed. Karl Altheim. Frankfurt: Insel, 1987.
RTP	Marcel Proust, *The Remembrance of Things Past*. 2 vols. Trans. C. K. Scott Montcrieff. New York: Random House, 1934.
S	Milan Kundera. *Slowness*. Trans. Linda Asher. New York: HarperCollins, 1996.
SdS	Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle*. Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1971.
SLP	Jacques Lacan, *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*. Trans. A. Wilden. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.
SS	Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems*. Trans. John Bednarz, Jr. with Dirk Baecker. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
ST	Anthony Kubiak, *Stages of Terror*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.
SW	Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke*. Frankfurt: Insel, 1966.
T	Hannah Arendt, *Thinking*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch, 1977.
TA	Paul Ricoeur, "Imagination in Discourse and Action." In *Du Texte à l'action: Essais d'herméneutiques 2*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986.
TaM	Lewis Rowell, *Thinking About Music: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Music*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983.
TI	Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.
TM	Hans Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*. Tübingen: Mohr, 1965; *Truth and Method*, 2d rev. ed. Trans. J. Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York: Crossroad, 1989.
TN	Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–8.
TR	Amittai Aviram, *Telling Rhythm: Body and Meaning in Poetry*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.
WD	Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967; *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

WH   Stephen Pepper, *World Hypotheses*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942.

WhD   Martin Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1954; *What Is Called Thinking?* Trans. F. D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

WMD   A. M. Dale, "Words, Music and Dance." In *Collected Papers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969.

NOTES

GENERAL INTRODUCTION
THINKING BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY
(ROBERT BURCH)

1   See e.g., Jeremy Bentham, *Works of Jeremy Bentham* (Edinburgh, 1843), 8: 242; 2: 497.

2   Gottlieb Frege, *Schriften zur Logik und Sprachphilosophie* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1971), 38ff.; English translations from *Posthumous Writings*, trans. P. Long & R. White (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979), 126ff.

3   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), 49, 56; English translations from *Signs*, trans. Richard C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 39, 44–5.

4   See Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 26; hereinafter *P*. Also "Living On: Border Lines," in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. G. Hartmann (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 84; and *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 423; English translations from *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 289; hereinafter *WD*.

5   E.g., Plato *Laws* 3. 682 a.

6   Aristotle *Poetics*, 1451 b.

7   Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 2: 327–9 (8: 8). Also, Iamblichus, *De Vita Pythagorica* (Amsterdam: Verlag A. M. Hakkert, 1965), 39–41 (§58).

8   Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: St Martins, 1924), 29 (B xxx).

9   Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Indianapolis and New York, 1950), 116 (Ak. 4: 367).

10 Hannah Arendt, *Thinking* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovitch, 1977), 15; hereinafter *T*.

11 Insofar as Hegel renders the ontological difference of Being and beings to be absolutely essentially no difference at all, Heidegger claims that "in a certain sense Hegel is farther from him than any other metaphysical position" (Martin Heidegger, *Zur Sache des Denkens* [Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962], 28; English translation from *Time and Being*, trans. J. Stambaugh [New York: Harper & Row, 1972], 26).

12 Martin Heidegger "Einleitung to 'Was ist Metaphysik?'," in *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1976), 206; English translation from "Introduction to 'What is Metaphysics?'," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 286; hereinafter *PM*.

13   Martin Heidegger, "Dichterisch wohnet der Mensch," in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), 193. English translation from ". . . Poetically Man Dwells . . ." in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 218; hereinafter *PLT*.

14   Derrida makes a similar point. "Since everything becomes metaphorical, there is no longer any literal meaning, and hence no longer any metaphor either" (Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981], 258).

15   I am following here the entry for *rhuthmos* from Liddell and Scott's *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1996), 1576.

16   Plato *Protagoras*, 326 b.

PART ONE: ETHICS OF WRITING

CHAPTER 1
GESTURE AND WORD: THE PRACTICE OF PHILOSOPHY AND THE PRACTICE OF POETRY (CARLO SINI)

1   Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

2   Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1003 a 33.

3   These two untitled poems by Paul Celan first appeared in the collection, *Lichtzwang* (1970), and are reprinted in, Paul Celan, *Gesammelte Werke in sieben Bänden*. Hrsg. Beda Allemann und Stefan Reichert (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000), Bd. 2, 312–13. The present translation was made exclusively for this volume by the editors.

4   Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks, 1914–1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 51–2 (Wittgenstein's emphasis), 6, 43.

CHAPTER 2
THE RISE AND FALL OF REALITY: SOCRATES, VIRTUAL REALITY, AND THE BIRTH OF PHILOSOPHY FROM THE "SPIRIT OF WRITING" (ALESSANDRO CARRERA)

1   These observations are loosely based on Carlo Sini, "La realtà virtuale e la realtà alla lettera. Una riflessione sulle problematiche della rappresentazione," in *L'incanto del ritmo* (Milan: Tranchida, 1993), 69–85.

2   Alfred J. Kallir, *Sign and Design: The Psychogenetic Source of the Alphabet* (Plymouth: Latimer, Trend & Co., 1961).

3   Carlo Sini, *Etica della scrittura* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1992); hereinafter *EDS*. See also Sini, *Filosofia e scrittura* (Bari Laterza, 1994).

4   In *Semiotica e filosofia* (Bologna, 1978), 277–99, Sini had already pointed out the importance of the myth of Herakles at the crossroad (narrated by Prodicus) as the first assessment of the epistemic role of the Greek alphabet.

5   Kallir is often quoted by Sini in *Etica della scrittura* as well as in other works. It will be useful to point out that when Sini began considering the origins of writing as the basis of

philosophic practice, every less-than-absolute conventionalism was being regarded with the same suspicion that a Lamarcks follower would have expected at a Darwinist convention. To question the arbitrariness of the sign was tantamount to pleading guilty to vulgar metaphysical habits. The disagreement is echoed in the conversation between Sini and Gianni Vattimo "Le parole e le cose," *Filosofia al presente*, ed. by Gianni Vattimo (Milan, 1990), 94–107. Sini's close reading of the historians of writing (Kallir, Havelock, Ong, and Gelb) is grounded, apart from Nietzschean influences, in Vico. Vico's statement on the history of *grammata* as the true history of mankind has been crucial to Sini since *Passare il segno* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1981), namely in the chapters on Vico's "Psychohistorical strategy" (as Sini calls it), where Sini argues that the inquiry on "how the scientific and technologic man writes" has priority over any musing on *logos*, Being, or truth (321).

6   According to Heidegger, truth has always been considered more as a problem of logic than as a fundamental philosophical question. Not even in Nietzsche is the question of truth free from the chains of logic. See Martin Heidegger, *Domande fondamentali della filosofia. Selezione di "problemi" della "logica"* (Milan: Murisa, 1988), 15. Italian translation by U. M. Ugazio of *Grundfragen der Philosophie.* Gesamtausgabe, Bd. 45 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1984), 7. English translation, *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz & André Schuwer (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 8.

7   It has been argued that Heidegger's notion of concealment (*lēthē*) is precisely a *writing effect* that originated from the word *alētheia*; see John D. Caputo, "The Myth of *Alētheia*," in *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993). It is a very delicate point, in which the entire Heideggerian theory of truth is at stake. It may be that in the future the philosophical community will decide that the Heideggerian notion of *alētheia* was nothing more than Heidegger's foundation myth, in the same manner that the Freudian theory of the primordial pack has now lost any scientific appeal and is merely regarded as the foundation myth of Freud's personal anthropology. Philosophy as autobiography, as Nietzsche was wont to say. The creation of myth, albeit dressed up in philosophical garments, is still the best way to answer to an unreachable origin, to an inconceivable birth. It is still the best way to follow Plato's light.

8   "Alphabet, we may say, is the content of logical form [*L'alfabeto, si potrebbe dire, è il contenuto della forma logica*]." See also Carlo Sini, "La voce della scrittura," *Archivio di filosofia*, 60, 1–3 (1992): 32.

9   In *La nascita della filosofia* (Milan Adelphi, 1975), 103–16, Giorgio Colli suggested that, more than just the field where the truth of Being is decided, philosophy is a literary genre championed by Plato as a reaction to the rampant pervasiveness of the sophistic dialectic in Athen's *agora*. Colli's statement is provocative enough, but it needs to be rephrased. Before Plato's time there was no literature and no literary genres. Neither Homer nor Hesiod nor Pindar knew what literature was. Dialectic and political rhetoric were being established at the core of Athens life, and the alphabetic transcription of the Homeric poems was being fostered by Pisistratus. The coincidence of these three events made it possible to divide the writing field into visible and recognizable objects like epic poetry, lyric poetry, history, rhetoric, philosophy, and science (like Euclid's *Elements*). Plato is not the father of a literary genre as much as he is the father of a writing *mode*. In this regard, Sini has suggested modifying the Husserlian definition of the philosopher as "mankind's officer" into "officer of a writing mode [*funzionario di una prassi di scrittura*]." See Carlo Sini and R. Fabbrichesi Leo, *Variazioni sul foglio-mondo* (Como: Hestia, 1994), 19.

10   If semiotics were not a secularized ontologic theology, Umberto Eco could not have said that the true protagonist of *The Name of the Rose* is "God's infinite omnipotence." See his interview in *Jesus*, 4/4, April 1982, now in Stauder, *Umberto Eco's "Der Name der Rose"*

(Erlangen: Palm & Enke, 1988), 159. I am grateful for the suggestion to Constantino Marmo, editor of the Italian annotated edition of *Il nome della rosa*.

11   In *De la grammatologie* ([Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967]; English translation, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak [Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974]; hereinafter *OG*), Jacques Derrida mentions Vico three times, admitting that Rousseau might have derived some of his linguistic ideas from him. Sini's criticism on Derrida deals with the binary notion of sign (signifier/signified) that Derrida has uncritically derived from De Saussure, while ignoring the triadic model proposed by C. S. Peirce (Representamen-Interpretant-Object). Derrida maintains that even though Peirce was first in criticizing logocentrism, "nothing is thinkable" outside the current Saussurian notion of sign, regardless of how metaphysical or theological it remains.

12   See the chapter on F. Creuzer in Carlos Sini, *Il simbolo e l'uomo* (Milan: Egeo, 1991), 91–141, and Sini's introduction to A. Bäumler, F. Creuzer, J. J. Bachofen, *Dal simbolo al mito* (Milan, 1983).

13   The question has been raised by Rocco Ronchi in "Il filosofo e le lettere," his introduction to the Italian translation of Ignace J. Gelb, *A Study of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963). See Gelb, *Storia della scrittura* (Milan: Spirali, 1993), xxxviii.

14   Sini's work fluctuates between the passion for genealogical inquiry and the thoroughness of the theoretical and hermeneutic approach. Each one of his genealogical works (*Passare il segno, Il simbolo e l'uomo*) is balanced by straightforward theoretical investigations, such as *Etica della scrittura* or *Immagini di verità*; English translation, *Images of Truth.*

15   The Italian poet Andrea Zanzotto has called "private language" (*lingua privata*) the dialogue between mother and infant. See Carlos Sini, "'Nota all' 'Elegia in petél'," in *Poesie 1938–1986*, ed. Stefano Agosti (Milan: Mondadori, 1993), 321. Sini has written extensively (mainly in *Images of Truth*) on the conflict between public language, or the language of *logos*, and private language, unthinkable within the borders of *logos* and yet experienced by anyone in everyday life.

16   On the Heraclitean sentence see Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," *PM*, 269 ff. Disagreements notwithstanding, Sini's motto remains Derrida's seminal remark at the very beginning of *De la grammatologie*, namely that what, in the last twenty centuries, has been summed up as language, from now on will be increasingly regarded as writing. Without going back two thousand years, in seventies Italy as well as in France, what Sini now calls *practica* used to be covered by a wide semantic field bestowed upon the world "language." At stake was the multiplicity of languages, and whether there was (or there wasn't) one metalanguage capable of uniting the different languages in dialectical synthesis. Thus, what was *prassi* in the sixties became *linguaggio* in the seventies, and what used to be *linguaggio* has now evolved into *scrittura*. See also Alessandro Carrera, *L'esperienza dell' istante.* (Milan: Lanfranchi, 1995), and "Consequences of Unlimited Semiosis: Metaphysics of the Sign and Semiotic Hermeneutics in Carlo Sini's Thought," in *Cultural Semiosis: Tracing the Signifier*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman [Continental Philosophy, vol. 6], (New York and London: Routledge, 1998).

CHAPTER 3

ANALOGICAL THINKING AS A FRIEND OF INTERPRETIVE TRUTH: REFLECTIONS BASED ON CARLO SINI'S *IMAGES OF TRUTH* (FORREST WILLIAMS)

1   Carlo Sini, *Images of Truth* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993), translated, with an Introduction, by Massimo Verdicchio (hereinafter *IT*); Italian original, *Immagini di verità: dal segno al simbolo* (Milan: Spirali, 1985), hereinafter *IV.*

2   Stephen Pepper, *World Hypotheses* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942); herein-after *WH*.

3   Pepper and Sini speak similarly of what the former terms "radical skepticism" and "dog-matism." Sini rejects both "the purest nihilism and relativism" as "the most dogmatic and inconsistent of forms" (*IT*, xxviii; *IV*, 9] and "the metaphysical will to dominate experience totally" (*IT*, 153; *IV*, 194).

4   *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (hereinafter *EB*), 1992, vol. 11, "Figures of Speech," 196.

5   Kant did see fit in his First Critique to assign a philosophical place of honor to analogical thinking in his transcendental deduction of the third set of Categories. Only in the Third Critique, however, which is at last beginning to receive the major attention it deserves, is the whole issue of analogical thinking in effect broached, under the heading of "reflective judgment." Cf. Rudolf Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Forrest Williams, "Philosophical Anthropology and the Critique of Aesthetic Judgment," 172–88.

6   As I have already indicated, I do not wish, of course, to make the unwarranted psycho-logical claim that Sini himself ever had any such analogical transfer from the discourse of literary criticism in mind at the time. Likewise, inasmuch as I am speaking here of analogy, not identity, I am not suggesting that the "child-moon experience" is itself what we would properly call a poem; nor, by the same token, that Sini's metainterpretational analysis is itself an exercise of literary criticism rather than of philosophical inquiry. Indeed, the thrust of analogical thinking is precisely to block simplistically "logical" identifications: "a/b :: c/d" is never to be confused with either "a/b = c/d" or its negation. See also infra, n. 11.

7   See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 167.

8   One might think here of Sartre's concept of a "detotalized totality." See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (London: NLB, 1976), 286; hereinafter *CDR*.

9   Dylan Thomas, "Do not go gentle into that good night"; William Ernest Henley, "Invictus."

10 If anyone should claim to find aspects of "Invictus" that would make it a good poem, that would not affect the thesis, but would only argue for insufficient critical discernment on my part in this particular instance. In that case, any other example of poetic imposture could be substituted in order to illustrate the point of the example, since the issue belongs to philosophy, not to any given effort at literary criticism as such.

11 This is not to say that one must have explicitly reflected on poetic discourse, much less be a practicing literary critic (as I certainly am not); only that one must have reflected to some degree, whether implicitly or explicitly, on the sort of experience most familiar to us through poetry (or art forms). Whether or not such mental tutelage is actually put to use in philosophic inquiry depends, needless to say, on innumerable imponderables of individual interest, temperament, and mental formation. See also supra, n. 6.

PART TWO: TRUTH, TEXTS, AND THE NARRATIVE SELF

INTRODUCTION (ROBERT BURCH)

1   G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic* (Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1991), 38 (§14).

2   G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1969), 414.

3   *PM*, 241.

4   "*PLT*, 218.

CHAPTER 4
WHEN TRUTH BECOMES WOMAN: MALE TRACES AND FEMALE SIGNS (EVE TAVOR BANNET)

The first half of the title of this chapter belongs to James Watson, who, in his own inimitable way, brought a number of us together under its auspices and challenged us to see what we could do with it.

1   Jacques Derrida, *Éperons/Spurs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 36; hereinafter *E/S*.

2   Jacques Derrida, *Psyche. Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1987), 11; hereinafter *PSY*.

3   Emmanuel Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée* (Paris: Vrin, 1982), 122; English translation, *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

4   For some interesting recent constructions of the history of this conjuncture, see James Kugel ed., *Poetry and Prophecy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), and Hatab, *Myth and Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

5   Roger Sherman Loomis's translation in *The Grail* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 33; hereinafter *G*.

6   Dante, *Divine Comedy* (New York: M, 1955), *Paradiso*, Canto 31, 71–2; hereinafter *DC*.

7   In *A Kierkegaard Anthology* (New York, 1946), Journals, 16, 6; hereinafter *KA*. See also Léon, "Either Muse or Countermuse: The Neither/Nor of the Second Sex in Kierkegaard's Aesthetics."

8   Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 124. See also Rosalyn Diprose, "Nietzsche and the Pathos of Distance," in *Nietzsche, Feminism and Political Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

9   Interestingly enough, the mother is the first object of the grail-knight's quest.

10 See Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). Bynum finds that these female images of Christ stem from the writings of men rather than of women, and generally from the writings of prelates and monks who stressed detachment from family and from the world and dependence on God. She also argues that this occurs at a moment of the spiritual history in which Christ comes to be seen as "the mediator who joins our substance to divinity and as the object of profound experiential union" (130).

11 See Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), and for a specific example of the use of such figures, see George Economou, "Natura," in *Women in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland, forthcoming).

12 Hesiod, "Theogeny," in *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica* (Loeb Classical Library), trans. H. G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 81–94.

13 See esp. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Typographies," in *Mimesis des articulations* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1975) and *L'imitation des modernes* (Paris: Flammarion, 1986). Derrida makes the same point in *Glas* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1974) and *Parages* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1987); hereinafter *PAR*.

14 Jacques Derrida, *Feu la cendre* (Paris: Des Femmes, 1987), 27; English translation, *Cinders*, trans. N. Lukackum (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

15 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Discours de la syncope* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1976), 5, 12.

16 Psalm 30.

17 Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 26.

18 Jacques Derrida, *La vérité en peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978), 21, 7; English translation, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. G. Bennington and I. McLeod (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 17, 3.

19 Luce Irigaray, *Passions élémentaires* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1982), 19, 74; English translation, *Elemental Passions*, trans. J. Collie & J. Still (London: Athlone Press, 1992), 23, 81.

20 Luce Irigaray, *Sexes et parentes* (Paris, 1987), 155; English translation, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 144.

21 As Rosi Braidotti confirms, much of Irigaray's work in the 1980s centered on countering and responding to Derrida. It seems to me Irigaray's need to counter Derrida mythography, which she rightly perceived as destructive to women, helps to explain her transition from celebrating women's love for each other to celebrating heterosexual unions. As Irigaray points out: "one of the dangers of love between women is the confusion of identity, the non-respect or non-perception of differences" (Luce Irigaray, *Éthique de la différence sexuelle* [Paris, 1984], 66; English translation, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. C. Burke and G. Gill [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993], 63; hereinafter *ESD*). In other words, Irigaray wants to avoid falling into the same self-reflexive trap as Derrida.

22 Luce Irigaray, *La croyance même* (Paris, 1983), 99; hereinafter *CM*.

23 Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *La jeune née* (Paris: Union générale d'Éditions, 1975), 157; English translation *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. B. Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 182.

24 Michèle Le Doeuff, *L'étude et le rouet* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989), 18; English translation *Hipparchia's Choice*, trans. T. Selous (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 21, and *The Philosophical Imaginary* (London: Athlone Press, 1989), 118; hereinafter *PI*.

CHAPTER 5

ORALITY AND WRITING: PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS* AND THE *PHARMAKON* REVISITED (P. CHRISTOPHER SMITH)

1 I shall refer here to the English translation, "Plato's Pharmacy," which appeared in Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 61–171; hereinafter *PPh*.

2   Martin Heidegger's words are *früher*, *anfanglich*, and *ursprünglicher*. Though I draw upon Heidegger extensively here, this essay is not intended as an explication or even application of any of his specific works. However, my uses of Heideggerian themes to elaborate the *Phaedrus* should be compared with Heidegger's own treatment of the dialogue in Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes*, Gesamtausgabe, Bd 19 (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1992), 308–51; English translation, *Plato's Sophist*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); hereinafter *GA 19*.

3   Though other works of Eric Havelock's have followed on the subject of the transition from orality to literacy in Greece, his *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) remains, in my view, the most interesting philosophically (hereinafter *PP*). It points out the differences in the oral-acoustical and literate-visual experiences of reality or being and argues convincingly that the transition from the ontology of Homer to the ontology of Plato presupposes a shift from the oral-acoustical to the literate-visual.

4   See, in particular, "The Voice That Keeps Silence" in Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* (*La voix et la phénomène*) (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 70–87.

5   Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* is intended to be a phenomenological exposition of the temporality of human existence and *of the concomitance of being and not being in any human being* which follows from this temporality. Seen this way it is continuous with Heidegger's later expositions of the being of the "thing" and the "artwork."

6   See Martin Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1954), 145–62, "Bauen, Wohnen, Denken," and 163–81, "Das Ding." See also Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1963), 7–68, "Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes"; English translation, "Building Dwelling Thinking," "The Thing," and "Origin of the Work of Art" in *PLT*.

7   See Martin Heidegger, "Plato's Doctrine of Truth," in *PM*.

8   See H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1965), 344–60; English translation, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1989), 325 ff; hereinafter *TM*.

9   See *OG*, 9–10.

10 We note, in this regard, that not all of Theuth's literary inventions are to be rejected. After all, among his other discoveries, the games of draughts and dice are not listed first here. Rather, as Derrida conveniently overlooks, numbers, calculation, geometry, and astronomy (*Phaedrus* 274 d), and these Pythagorean sciences, all of which presuppose a break with the oral tradition and a turn to the graphic and diagrammatical, figure prominently in Plato's own educational curriculum (see *Republic* 510 c–d and 525–7 d).

11 See Gregory Nagy, *Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 69–83, "The Name of Achilles."

12 Ultimately New Testament scholars of the interpretive school, for example, Raymond Brown, Robert Karris, et al., who see the meaning of its narratives as evolving rather than historical, presuppose just this point.

CHAPTER 6
ETHICS OF THE NARRATIVE SELF (RICHARD KEARNEY)

1   Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984–8), vol. 3, hereinafter *TN*; *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), hereinafter *OA*.

2   This function of narrative identity relates broadly to the three temporal ecstasies of Heideggerian Dasein which Heidegger himself traces back to the schematizing function of transcendental imagination in Kant's First Critique. For a more detailed commentary on Heidegger's reading of Kant's concept of transcendental imagination see my *Wake of Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 189–95.

3   It is worth recalling here that the story of a society, no less than that of an individual life, is also perpetually refigured by the real and fictive stories it tells about itself. A society's self-image is also a "cloth woven of stories told."

4   See in particular Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 5 ff.

5   See also Martha Nussbaum's insightful analysis of the role "literary imagination" plays in the development of ethical self-knowledge and judgment in *Love's Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), hereinafter *LK*, especially following studies, "Flawed Crystals: James's *The Golden Bowl* and Literature as Moral Philosophy," "Finely Aware and Richly Responsible: Literature and the Moral Imagination," "Perceptive Equilibrium: Literary Theory and the Soul," and "Narrative Emotions." These studies, Nussbaum explains, "argue for a conception of ethical understanding that involves emotional as well as intellectual activity and give a certain type of priority to the perception of particular people and situations, rather than to abstract rules. They argue, further, that this ethical conception finds its most appropriate expression and statement in certain forms usually considered literary rather than philosophical – and that if we wish to take it seriously we must broaden our conception of moral philosophy in order to include these texts inside it. They attempt to articulate the relationship, within such a broader ethical inquiry, between literary and more abstractly theoretical elements" (*LK*, ix). Nussbaum goes on to make the following statements: "the fresh imagination of particularity (provided by fiction) is an essential moral faculty" (*LK*, 237); "allowing oneself to be in some sense passive and malleable, open to new and sometimes mysterious influences, is part of the transaction and part of its value. Reading novels . . . is a practice of falling in love. And it is in part because novels prepare the reader for love that they make the valuable contribution they do to society and to moral development" (*LK*, 238); "Novels can be a school for the moral sentiments, distancing us from blinding personal passions and cultivating those that are more conducive to community. Proust goes so far as to say that the relation we have with a literary work is the only human relation characterized by genuine altruism, and also the only one in which, not caught up in the vertiginous kaleidoscope of jealousy, the reader can truly know the mind of another person . . . there is a real issue here and I do not think we can fully understand the ethical contribution of the novel without pursuing it" (*LK*, 240). Several of Nussbaum's arguments for an ethical imagination find support in other contemporary theories – e.g., Arthur Danto's idea of "transfigurative literature," Northrop Frye's notion of "educated imagination," Frank Lentriccia's concept of "art for life's sake," Iris Murdoch's claim that "art is the most educational thing we have," or Marshall Gregory's thesis of the "vicarious imagination" inspired by Sir Philip Sidney's "Apology" for ethical literature: "Narratives have the power to move us because they are empirical, which is the grounds of their vividness, because they provide deep companionship, which means that they are fulfilling. And what moves us, of course, also *forms us*. . . . History and literature both possess an immense power to educate. Since modernism's elevation of the notion of aesthetic purity and structuralism's elevation of the notion of linguistic indeterminateness, the educational power of both literature and history has nearly been forgotten, especially by critics and academics. Writers, however, continue to assert literature's and history's educational power" ("Selfhood Forged and Memory Enriched: Narrative's Empirical Appeal to the Vicarious Imagination" [forthcoming]).

6   Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), hereinafter *CI*; "Permission to Narrate," *London Review of Books*, February 29 1984. Also on the role of narrative in

nationalist movements see Tony Judt's review essay, "The New Old Nationalism" in *The New York Review of Books*, 61, no. 10, May 26 1994, 44–51.

7   Paul Ricoeur, "Life in Quest of Narrative," in *On Paul Ricoeur* (London: Routledge, 1991), 22–3; hereinafter *OPR*.

8   One might explore links here between Ricoeur's version of a phronetic understanding of experience and Dewey's notion of "emotional thinking." Another useful parallel may be found in John Bergson's analysis of the ethical role of narrative in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974). I am grateful to Mark Muldoon for bringing Bergson's ethical concept of narrative to my attention. For a detailed reading of Aristotle's notion of *phronēsis* and its relation to ethics and modern thought, see Joseph Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground* (Indianapolis: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

9   Ricoeur, "Imagination in Discourse and Action," in *Du texte à l'action* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986), 213–36, in particular 224–7; hereinafter *TA*.

10 Ricoeur acknowledges an ethical and political task for narrative imagination in insuring that "the tension between the horizon of expectation (future/utopia) and the space of experience be preserved without giving way to schism" (*TN*, 3: 258). Here the narrative imagination takes on the role of a "social imagination" in both its ideological function of legitimation and its utopian function of subversion. Both these socio-political axes presuppose a certain ethical vision of the good life that is, the configuration of communal life by narrative imagination. See Peter Kemp's excellent analysis of this question in "*Éthique et narrativité*" (*Aquinas* [Rome], 29, 1986) where he argues that the acceptance or rejection of ideologies and utopias is only possible on the basis of this imaginative vision of the good life in society. If ethics is a vision rather than a rule, it consists of intuitive models for action and not of purely abstract maxims. By imagining and narrating wise forms of action and communication it expresses the practical truth of human life. Kemp writes: "This imagination is not possible without narrative, because without emplotment there would be no sense in unfolding some models for action. Thus ethics must necessarily be the narrative configuration of the good life. Had this not from the start been configured by stories, it would not have been capable of being integrated either into the author's works or into those of the historian as that vision which would never affect the reader in an ethically neutral manner. It would have the same affect as a foreign body in the eye." This raises the vexed question of criteria for judging and adjudicating between rival narratives. The narrative configuration of ethics which is invoked to evaluate between stories is, Kemp concludes, to be found on a different level to that of the stories themselves. Nevertheless, he does not appeal to some "Archimedean point" or metanarrative, admitting that the ethical evaluation of narratives can only be based on other narratives. But Kemp refuses to see this as a vicious (rather than a healthy) hermeneutic circle: "This does not necessarily mean that ethical criticism is arbitrary. The stories on which an ethics well rooted in life are founded are those whose guiding power remains throughout history, and which, in times of crisis, have demonstrated their ability to encourage people to stop thinking in terms of fixed ideas." Though Kemp does not, unfortunately, cite any examples of these "guiding" narratives, I take him to be referring to the abiding ethical stories of resistance, heroism, charity, and courage that inform the great traditions of ethical humanism and fraternity – the classical stories of Socrates and Seneca, the biblical stories of Moses, Jesus, St. Frances, the mythical stories of Antigone, Achilles, Iphigenia, etc. Each ethical culture, Western and non-Western, contains a series of recurring and paradigmatic narratives which each historical generation hermeneutically retrieves and retells in order to preserve and cultivate its sense of ethical memory, identity, and responsibility. For a development of these ideas see T. Peter Kemp, "Toward a Narrative Ethics: A Bridge between Ethic and the Narrative Reflection of Ricoeur", 65–87.

11   This empathic power, what we might call with T. S. Eliot "auditory imagination", is also
     adverted to by Gadamer when he speaks of a "learning through suffering" with the other
     when we recognize our own finite limits and begin to listen to the other: "anyone who
     listens is fundamentally open. Without such openness to one another there is no genuine
     human bond. . . . Openness to the other involves recognizing that I myself must accept
     some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do this" (*TM*, 361).
     For Gadamer the properly hermeneutic understanding is one that allows the other to
     really say something to us, to listen, and to respond.

12   See James Miller, *Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 5; and
     my dialogue with Derrida entitled "Deconstruction and the Other" in my *Dialogues with
     Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (Manchester, 1987). See also Honi Haber's critique of
     Foucault's postmodern denial of selves and community in *Beyond Postmodern Politics* (New
     York: Routledge, 1994), 73–133.

13   Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Culture," in *Between Past and Future* (Harmondsworth,
     England: Penguin, 1977), 220–1; hereinafter *BPF*. See also J. Isaac's discussion of this
     theme in *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992),
     167–70.

14   *LK*, 162; and see the extended note 5, supra.

15   "If it is true that fiction is only completed in life and that life can be understood only
     through the stories that we tell about it, then an *examined* life, in the sense of the word as
     we have borrowed it from Socrates, is a life *recounted*." This recounted good life entails
     both poetics and ethics, both the free play of fiction and the responsibility of ethics – or to
     put it in Yeatsian terms, both "perfection of the life and of the work." But this comple-
     mentarity of narrative poetics and ethics is not a matter of identity; it is by guarding over
     each other's difference and distinctness that poetics and ethics best serve each other's
     mutual interests and aims.

PART THREE: POETRY, PHILOSOPHY, AND THE SPIRIT OF HISTORY

CHAPTER 7

WOBURN ON MY MIND AND IN MY (MIND'S) EYE: BECKETT'S *POIĒSIS* (STEPHEN BARKER)

1   Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1971), 20; hereinafter *SdS*.

2   Régis Durand, *Lacan and Narration* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press,
    1983), 849; hereinafter *LaN.*

3   Jacques Lacan, *Speech and Language in Pyschoanalysis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins
    University Press, 1981), 150–1, n. 172; hereinafter *SLP*.

4   Sigmund Freud, *The Freud Reader*, ed Peter Gay (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 148.

5   I have referred to this occulted ciphering elsewhere as "videation," calling attention to the
    electronic coolness with which it manifests itself. Even in the real of staged drama, as for
    example in Handke or Saurraute, not to mention Beckett, this coolness is associated either
    with a certain mechanization of the occluded subject, as in *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Kaspar*, or
    The Silence, or with an actual absence of the key signatory or signatories of the piece, either
    through narrated absence (e.g., Godot) or a narrative of absence (e.g., *Cascando*, *Film*,

Offending the Audience). Beckett's *Cascando* offers a perfectly postmodern focus for the videated image, since not only does Woburn not "appear" in the piece, but *all* voice in it is electronic, to be heard in disembodied form on the radio.

6   Anthony Kubiak, *Stages of Terror* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 22; hereinafter *ST*.

7   Derrida extensively discussed this paradox in his lectures at the University of California at Irvine in the spring of 1993.

8   See Kubiak's *Stages of Terror* for a first-level discussion of this phenomenon; indeed Kubiak locates the terror he explores in the "ontological confrontation with the non-being . . . the terror of nothing . . . the missing presence, which Kubiak calls "Deimos" (*ST*, 23).

9   My discussion of this distance occupies a good deal of *Autoaesthetics* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1992), where I develop a notion of writing power derived from the *étrangeté* inevitably produced by textuality and metaphoricity; it is, I believe, the core of the cap *Angst* of the artist/writer in a linguistic age.

10   *WD*, 202.

11   Jacques Lacan *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 207–8.

12   With regard to the "*aphanisis* of the subject" in Lacan, see *LaN*, 863, and for further evidence that it is inherent in the *unheimlich* and in paramodern narrative theory. In this regard, one might think of Nietzsche's critique of presence and language in "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense," Derrida's extensive critique of Freud in "Freud and the Scene of Writing" (*WD*) and of the aesthetic voice in *Truth in Painting*, Certeau's notion of the heterology of speech in *Heterologies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), and Debord's critique of the image in *SdS* (avoiding Debord's direct politicization of the image but emphasizing its "alienation"), to produce a sense of the "trace [in the Derridean sense] of the storyteller" forming a residue in the/any story. This trace is the source of the terror and the chimerically vital energy of narrativity commonly explored in the paramodern.

13   Samuel Beckett, *Cascando and Other Short Pieces* (New York Grove Press, 1968), hereinafter *C*.

14   Ruby Cohn, *Back to Beckett* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 202.

CHAPTER 8
THE NAMING OF THE HYMN: HEIDEGGER AND HÖLDERLIN (KAREN FELDMAN)

1   The lectures of Heidegger's 1942 course are collected in volume 53 of the Gesamtausgabe, entitled *Hölderlins Hymne "Der Ister,"* (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), hereinafter *GA 53*. English translation, *Hölderlin's Hymn: "Der Ister"* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). The course is divided into three sections, the second of which centers on Sophocles' *Antigone*. This paper will focus on Heidegger's reading of "Der Ister," primarily as treated in the volume's first section.

2   The shared moment of the community returns us to §1 where Heidegger claims, "Every essential poetizing also poetizes 'anew' the essence of poetizing itself" (*GA 53*, 8). We now hear "poetizing" not as a symbolically imagistic relationship to meaning,

but as a naming of what is. The "anew" here, however, along with its punctuating marks, opens up another side of the "Der Ister" course, that is, the questions of a poetic time and of beginning, for the "telling finding of Being" (*GA 53*, 149) arises out of a poetic time, a temporality of the river, that is not *in* time. The metaphysical determination of a symbolic image rests upon a notion of intratemporality, a time in which the image is thought first, and then stands for an idea. But does the image *stand*, are the image and the idea accessible to thinking out of a uniform presence? The symbolic image is only possible on the basis of this leveled-out time. Yet if presence and poetic temporality are opened up by the word of the poem, then the vanishing and intimating river of the Ister hymn does not run its course *in* time. Instead, Heidegger claims, it is itself underway or along a path that does not take place "in" time but rather is of time itself.

3 For a comprehensive overview of the significance of naming in Heidegger's work, see Dieter Thomä, *Die Zeit des Selbst und die Zeit danach* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), pp. 659–84.

4 See Paul de Man, "Heidegger's Exegeses of Hölderlin," in *Blindness and Insight* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 246–66.

CHAPTER 9
ON TRANSVALUING HISTORY: RILKE AND NIETZSCHE
(RICHARD DETSCH)

1 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Sämtliche Werke* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1966), 294; hereinafter *SW*. All translations from the German and French originals are my own.

2 *Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft* 14 (1987), 21–34; hereinafter *BRG*.

3 Frowen makes the point that Rilke learned from Nietzsche how to reconcile the Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies in his own art and thus overcome the subjectivity of his early poetry (*BRG*, 24). She misses the mark, however, when she maintains later in her essay that Nietzsche differs from Rilke in that Rilke always needed a counterpart in order to spur on his art: the unfinished God of the *Book of Hours* and the angel of the *Duino Elegies*, whereas for Nietzsche there was no counterpart, only his own "mystical self-apotheosis" (*BRG*, 33). Frowen ignores the fact that much of Rilke criticism sees precisely this self-apotheosis in Rilke's poetry and considers his God and his angel as projections of his own creative will. It is at least arguable that there is no contrast between Rilke and Nietzsche here.

4 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. Karl Schlechta (Munich: Karl Hanser, 1966), 1: 217; hereinafter *NW*.

5 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1987), 1: 343; hereinafter *RB*.

6 *New York Review of Books*, vol. 42, no. 11, June 22 1995, 14.

7 *RB*, 3: 891.

8 Elizabeth Schmidt-Pauli, *Rainer Maria Rilke: Ein Gedenkbuch* (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1940), 109–10.

9 As Egon Schwarz demonstrates, Rilke himself was not without a degree of anti-Semitism in a way typical of a non-Jewish native of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Significantly

from the point of view of the present study, Rilke finds Jews lacking in genuineness. They would thus exhibit a defect characteristic of modern times in contrast to the more genuine aspects of the medieval period. See Rilke's letter to Nanny Wunderly-Volkart of January 16, 1923. He writes of the Jew, "who *is* not all that he brings, transmits . . . so that, to the extent that we are able to make it our own, we are delighted to keep what was brought but finally and suddenly feel the bringer to be too much, too near, in fact nothing but obtrusive because he is not identical with what he brings (and could bring thousands of other things and tomorrow possibly even the opposite)" (Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe an Nanny Wunderly-Volkart* [Frankfurt, 1977], 2: 848). Nietzsche manifests a similar attitude toward the Jews when he writes of "the Jewish feeling for which everything natural is disgrace itself" (*NW*, 2: 132).

10 Rudolf Kassner, *Rilke* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1976), 54.

11 Marga Wertheimer, *Arbeitsstunden mit Rainer Maria Rilke* (Zürich: Oprecht, 1940), 16.

12 Egon Schwarz, *Das verschluckte Schluchzen* (Frankfurt am Main: Anthenäum, 1972).

13 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe zur Politik* (Frankfurt Insel, 1992), 446; hereinafter *BzP*.

14 Guido Schneeberger, *Nachlese zu Heidegger* (Bern: Guido Schneeberger, 1962), 144–6, 148–50.

PART FOUR: THE "FORCE OF RHYTHM" IN LIFE, PHILOSOPHY, AND POETRY
INTRODUCTION (ROBERT BURCH)

1 Friederich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 140. Hereinafter *GS*.

2 Friederich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1954), 58 (§15).

3 Aristotle *Metaphysics*, 983 a3.

4 1 *Corinthians*, 1. 20–5.

5 Plato *Phaedo*, 61 a.

CHAPTER 10
REFLECTIONS ON SPEED (DAVID HALLIBURTON)

1 Anthony Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 53, 191; hereinafter *CoM*.

2 Jean-François Lyotard, *Postmodern Condition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 52; hereinafter *PMC*.

3 Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 45–6; hereinafter *SS*.

4 Henry Adams, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (New York: Library of America, 1993), 1167; hereinafter *A*.

5   Roland Barthes, *Fashion System* (New York, Hill & Wang, 1983), 97; hereinafter *FS*.

6   John-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith and ed. Jonathon Rée (London: NLB, 1976), 295.

7   J. G. A. Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 425; hereinafter *MM*.

8   Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 281.

9   William C. Carter, *Proustian Quest* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1992), 9. Carter offers valuable information on phenomena of speed in Proust's lifetime.

10 Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 2 vols., trans. C. K. Scott Montcrieff, (New York: Random House, 1934), 1:5; hereinafter *RTP*. Despite the unsatisfactory English title of these volumes, the quality of the translation is generally very high; I have therefore cited from it in my text. I have also checked problematic terms and passages against the original French and where necessary have made silent corrections. For example, at 2:449 "by" should be "but" (*mais*).

11 The journal *Annales d'histoire social et économique* was founded in 1929 by Lucien Febvre and March Bloch and was later joined by the historian who was ultimately the best known of the group, Fernand Braudel.

12 Milan Kundera, *Slowness* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 1–2; hereinafter *S*.

13 Virginia Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall," originally published in the collection entitled *A Haunted House*, posthumously published in 1944 by the Hogarth Press created by Leonard and Virginia, and reprinted in *The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf* (New York Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1989), 89; hereinafter *MW*.

14 Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (1931; rpt. New York Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1959), 297.

CHAPTER 11
THE MEANING OF RHYTHM (AMITTAI AVIRAM)

1   Charles Bernstein, *A Poetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "The Echo of the Subject," 139–207; Henri Meschonnic, *Critique du rythme* (Paris: Verdier, 1982).

2   Émile Benveniste, "La notion de 'Rythme' dans son expression linguistique," 326–35.

3   Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), 16–144.

4   For further discussion, see my *Telling Rhythm* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994); hereinafter *TR*.

5   See Meschonnic, "Rhyme and Life," 90–107.

6   See Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry* (New Haven, 1981).

7   See *TR*, 197–220.

CHAPTER 12
MOUSIKĒ TECHNĒ: THE PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE
OF MUSIC IN PLATO, NIETZSCHE, AND HEIDEGGER
(BABETTE E. BABICH)

1 See especially M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), hereinafter *AGM*; as well as Warren D. Anderson, *Music and Musicians in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), hereinafter *M*; and for a perspective including the culture of ancient Rome: Giovanni Comotti, *Music in Greek and Roman Culture* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), hereinafter *MGR*. In addition, see Lewis Rowell, *Thinking About Music* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983), hereinafter *TaM*; Trimpi, *Muses of One Mind* (Princeton, 1983); and, more rigorously, A. M. Dale, "Words, Music and Dance" Dale, in *Collected Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 156–69: hereinafter *WMD*.

2 Definitions and source references quoted from *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, Founded Upon the Seventh Edition of Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), 520; hereinafter *L&S*.

3 Comotti further elaborates the broad scheme of music in antiquity: "in the fourth and fifth centuries B.C., the phrase *mousikos anēr* would be used to indicate an educated man, able to comprehend poetic language in its entirety. The unity of poetry, melody, and gesture in archaic and classical culture made the rhythmic-melodic expression contingent on the demands of the verbal text. The simultaneous presence of music, dance, and word in almost all forms of communication suggests also the existence of a widespread musical culture among the Greek peoples from the remotest times" (*MGR*, 5).

4 Thrasybulos Georgiades, *Musik und Rhythmus bei den Griechen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958), 45; hereinafter *MR*. Of course, not every account of music in antiquity admits such a broad connection to the muses and to culture in general. A critical exception is Warren Anderson. In *Music and Musicians in Ancient Greece* (cited above; *M*), a book dedicated to delineating what he takes to be the "truly" musical, Anderson seems to understand the specifically sounding essence of music in a quasi-autochthonous sense, as the "amateur musician" opposed to the expert theorist or *philosopher*. The opposition Anderson proposes finds an instrumentally sounding music in rather determined distinction to the extreme variety of ancient references, where these references do not reflect the difference between the amateur and the professional musician as this difference is understood in today's musical culture. Anderson's focus on just the music one might play (his book might also have been titled, "Musical *Instruments* and Musicians in Ancient Greece") while (very!) laudable on many accounts misses the ancient breadth of the term exemplifying instead the monologically modern and very Western distinction between music and language. Yet even Anderson concedes the broad referentiality of antique music where he notes, with careful reference to Plutarch (and thereby, at least in the Spartan context, of the virile activity of music as Terpander expresses it), that *"Mousa* stands for music and poetry in all their manifestations as essential cultural expressions of the city-state" (*M*, 64). But Anderson outdoes Nietzsche in repeated references to Socrates' rabble origins (Socrates was a stonecutter's son). The claim that Socrates hated music because he did not understand it would be better if Anderson had only worded it in this wise, reminiscent as it would have to be of Nietzsche's verdict on the death of tragedy, due to a failure of understanding on the joint parts of Socrates and of Euripides. As it is, Anderson inserts a genteel, dissonantly Victorian vision of ancient Athens, with the well-born Plato expertly playing in a chamber music trio on a five- or seven-stringed lyre, with his high-born companions on the syrinx or aulos. It is unclear that music playing counted as such a class-based diversion or even that "facility" with musical instruments would have been limited to the upper classes – the function and status of flute players in the *Symposium* and especially in comedy would seem to run contrary to this assumption of music-lesson culture.

5   "'*Musische Erziehung durch musische Betätigung*'," (*MR*, 45).

6   Thrasybulos Georgiades, *Music and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 134; hereinafter *ML*.

7   Thrasybulos Georgiades writes "The art of the Western World presupposes something which lies outside its own boundaries. . . . Similarly, the poetry of the Western World presupposes simple prose as its ultimate source . . ." (*ML*, 134)

8   The political question which can be posed against any philosophical text after the unspeakable (now: in the antique Greek sense) experience of the Second World War – or whether on its basis a Hitler could or could not be countenanced – as the ethical touchstone that rates a Levinas above a Heidegger, becomes a fruitless one on this reading.

9   In general terms, *mousikē* functions only within the complex of ancient Greek culture. For this reason A. M. Dale could write that "Classical Greek needed no Wolfian doctrine of 'poetic supremacy' because song, with its dance, [i.e., music] was a function of the words themselves when they were alive – that is in a performance." To say this is not to make of music a Hanslickian reserve. For Dale, the performance as such, itself an epiphany of Greek culture and its communal foundation, demanded everything society had to offer it. As a performance, the musical event, the event of "words, music and dance," required a staging and a consummate celebration: "one great occasion in all its bright splendour, its *aglaia*, round an altar, or in the orchestra, or processionally. . . . With the passing of the kind of society which required and supported public performances of this kind, the living art of this supple polymetry soon perished; it shrank and petrified into the words on paper, so unskillfully preserved that even the proper ordering of the phrases quickly faded from memory" (*WMD*, 168). Gary Tomlinson points to the difficulty inherent in the metaphorical language implicated in such an ethical (versus cosmic) ideal of harmony in a chapter entitled "Modes and Planetary Song: The Musical Alliance of Ethics and Cosmology," in his book *Music in Renaissance Magic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). For casual purposes, a philosophical ethics or style of philosophizing represents an exemplary doing of philosophy consummate in the sense given to the expression of practical artistry, where it is important to note that one speaks of the proper, *comme il faut*, *wie es sich gehört*, exactly when it is not ordinary.

10 According to Theon of Smyrna, the Pythagoreans called "music the harmonization of opposites, the unification of disparate things, and the conciliation of warring elements. . . . Music, as they say, is the basis of agreement among things in nature and of the best government in the universe." *Mathematica*, I.

11 Plato, *Republic* 4. 424 c. "Damon," as Rowell writes, "one of Socrates teachers, was one of the earliest authors to suggest a specific conception between music and the formation of the human character" (*TaM*, 51).

12 See for a contemporary discussion of the issues at stake, beyond the likewise relevant current debate on performance practice, Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

13 Socrates' literary "silence" is also what saves him from stasis. As Adorno writes, "music and literature alike are reduced to immobility by writing." Theodor Adorno, *Quasi una Fantasia*: *Essays on Modern Music*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso, 1992), 295.

14 The gentleman's club or (male) biased conviction that Xanthippe was a nag and a drag on Socrates and that he sought to have as little to do with her as possible is gainsaid by the very fact that Socrates, once a student of Diotima, was at his age, married and, likewise at his age, blessed with *young* sons – the very ones he invoked during his trial under the ruse

of not mentioning their vulnerability or youth. But it is the fact that he has such young sons which tells us that his marriage was something other than a sham (it was no doubt a hardship, but the trouble would have been largely on Xanthippe's side given the breadless pursuit that occupied his time). From the Greek perspective, a marriage limited to the expression of intimate relations was routine. Companionship or conversation had to wait for Bernard Shaw.

15   The command was the literal: "O Socrates, make and practice music" (Plato *Phaedo* 60 e). We may assume that the god of the dream could be named Apollo, as we are justified in so doing by way of metaphor (as the dream-god par excellence) or else metonymy (the Apollo who held state executions in abeyance for the duration of his feast).

16   The ironic point is that in a Platonic scheme, such a routine rendering of "real" music or poetic composition necessarily limits the poet to the unreal world of myth or fable. The joke equates Aesop with Apollo. Or perhaps as Socrates is said to resemble Marsyas, Aesop is better equated with Dionysos.

17   Cf. Plato *Republic* 531 a–532 c. Although by quoting these esoteric lines from the *Republic* I also invoke the elegant referentiality of the subtitle to Ernest G. McClain, *The Pythagorean Plato: Prelude to the Song Itself* (York Beach: Nicholas Hays, 1978), I have noted important reserves concerning the exactly metaphorical limits of this expression of the force of analogy *itself* as what Graham Pont applauds as an identification of "the *analogia* or proportion of 6:8:9:12 and the three means it encodes, arithmetic, geometric, and harmonic" to show "how Plato applied the precise mathematics of tuning and temperament to the quantitative modelling of political systems and the fine attunement of the ideal city-state" (Graham Pont, "Analogy in Music: Origins, Uses, Limitations," in *Metaphor: A Musical Dimension*, ed. J. C. Kassler [Basel: Gordon and Beacon, 1994], 195). My metaphorical reservations respond to Georgiades' broader reading, a reading which would not subsume the ideal of musical harmony to the mathematics or "rationality" of the same just where mathematics and rationality begin from that harmony and not the other way round – as well as to Árpád Szabó, *The Beginnings of Greek Mathematics* (Dordrecht and Boston: Reidel, 1978), whom Pont himself cites: 132 ff. For the contrary emphasis, see Robert Brambaugh, *Plato's Mathematical Imagination*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954).

18   West refers to Socrates' tutelage in the lyre on p. 26, citing Plato *Euthydemus* 272 c.

19   Richmond Y. Hathorn, *Greek Mythology* (Lebanon: American University of Beruit, 1977), 162.

20   The contrast between the world of images and the world of ideas, between pious petition in the face of bodily sickness (Asklepius) and the new program of scientific theoretical medicine represented by the followers of Hippocrates deserves further investigation.

21   For a philosophical discussion of Nietzsche and music, see my treatment of Nietzsche's concinnity in my Introduction and Chapter One of *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science* (Albany, 1994), as well as and for greater musicological rigor, books and essays by Friedrich Love, Roger Hollinrake, Curt Paul Janz, George Liebert, among a great many other names. An extensive but nevertheless still *incomplete* bibliography on the theme may be found in "Nietzsche and Music: A Partial Bibliography," *New Nietzsche Studies* 1, 1–2 (1996): 64–78.

22   Curt Paul Janz, "Nietzsche Verhältnis zur Musik seiner Zeit" in *Nietzsche-Studien* 7 (1978), 308–26.

23   Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage,

1967) Preface: "Attempt at a Self-Criticism: 3," 20. German text in *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*, (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980, c. 1967–77), vol. 1, 15; hereinafter KSA.

24 For concinnity in music, see, in general, Jan La Rue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis*, (Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1992). Concinnity is a rhetorical term employed by Cicero (*Orator* 19.65; 24.81; 25.82) and Seneca and by Alberti in a musico-architectural context (see note 25 below). In a mechanical extension, Graeme Nicholson uses the term concinnity in a carpenterly sense to express the fitting and jointure of Heidegger's use of the German *Fug* or *Fügung*, as in mortise and tenon, or coordination of the organs of human sexual expression. See Graeme, Nicholson, *Illustrations of Being* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1992), 272–3. It is also used as a term for facilitating concourse in urban transportation studies and has been utilized in descriptions of Hindu ethics.

25 According to Vitruvius, music was among the essential formational requisites for the practice of architecture, and listed the following desiderata: "Let him be educated, have skill with a pencil, . . . have followed the philosophers with attention, understand music . . ." (1.1.3). Such a knowledge of music was useful for practical (mostly military) reasons, "Music, also, the architect ought to understand so that he may have knowledge of the canonical and mathematical theory, and besides be able to tune balistae, catapultae, and scorpiones to the proper key" (1.1.8), where the "correct note" heard by the skilled workman served as a kind of acoustic level. The same understanding would ensure the sounding proportions of theaters together with the "bronze vessels (in Greek *hecheia*) which are placed in niches under the seats in accordance with the musical intervals on mathematical principles. These vessels are arranged with a view to musical concords or harmony . . ." (1.1.9), where such an arrangement evidently served to amplify the actor's voice. Vitruvius' assumption of the importance of music for architecure is echoed in Alberti's claim that the intellectual edification is inspired by "lines and figures pertaining to music and geometry," (*De re aedificatoria*, 7. 10, cited in Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, [New York: Norton, 1971], 9). Wittkower explores the role of "Harmonic Proportion in Architecture" and Palladio's conventions in particular at critical length. For Wittkower, Alberti's claim can only be understood if we recall that for Alberti, "music and geometry are fundamentally one and the same; music is geometry translated into sound, and that in music the very same harmonies are audible which inform the geometry of the building." Robin Maconie, a music critic captivated by the literal interpretation of such a notion, is more emphatic than Rudolf Wittkower when he declares that "The Palladian interior can be considered in precisely the same terms as a recording studio," save that the studio designer seeks to avoid those eigentones Palladio sought to generate. (See Robin Maconie, *Concept of Music* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990], 160 ff.) Wittkower however notes that such resonant notions for the theory of proportional design is out of style, where he cites the substance of Julien Guadet's critical reserve in *Éléments et théorie de l'architecture*, concerning "je ne sais quelles propriétés mystérieuses des nombres ou, encore, des rapports comme la musique on trouve entre les nombres de vibrations qui déterminent les accords." For Wittkower, if Guadet's sobriety is beyond reproach, the problem remains: "'*Les proportions, c'est l'infini*' – this terse statement is still indicative of our approach. That is the reason why we view researches into the theory of proportion [*that is: musical or harmonic proportion – BB*] with suspicion and awe. But the subject is again very much alive in the minds of young architects today, and they may well evolve new and unexpected solutions to this ancient problem" (154).

26 "*Atque est quidem concinnitas munus et paratio partes, quae alioquin inter se natura destinctae sunt, perfecta quadam ratione constituere, ita ut mutuo ad speciem correspondabat.*" Alberti, *De re aedificatori libri decem* 9.5 (1962, 815). Cited by Paul von Naredi-Rainer, *Architektur & Harmonie* (Cologne: Dumont, 1982), 23. In this same context, beyond the reference to urban transport and Hindu ethics (note 29), Naredi-Rainer also notes Luigi Vagnetti's

comprehensive investigation of the word "concinnitas" and its verbal affinities which apparently may be taken as far as the word cocktail. See Vagnetti, "Concinnitas, riflessioni sul significato di un termine albertiano" in *Studie documenti du architecture* 2 (1973): 139–61.

27   Thus a specifically musical temperament is required just to follow (to read) Nietzsche in his textual ventures. Without a musical reading, Nietzsche offers only contradictions and logical infelicities – at best a kind of poetry for philosophers with a taste for it, at worst, sheer nonsense. Nietzsche quite literally plays philosophical perspectives upon philosophical perspectives along with conceptual terms. It is thus for the sake of winning the great part of Nietzsche's philosophy that a resonantly musical reading is needed. Within such a dispositionally resonant interpretation, oppositions or contrasts evident in the conceptual independence of the pairs truth/science and genealogy/morals can be heard as posed in accord.

28   I have offered a book to illustrate this point with regard to the philosophy of science and the epistemic and methodological significance of Nietzsche's thought for this tradition: Babich, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science*. Here I illustrate the musical (philosophical) reading of an aphorism by contrast with a flatly opposed or literal approach.

29   Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Marion Faber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 68. The German is useful here: "*Wer mit Ungeheuern kämpft, mag zusehn, dass er nicht dabei zum Ungeheuer wird. Und wenn du lange in einen Abgrund blickst, blickt der Abgrund auch in dich hinein*" (KSA 5, 98).

30   G. Himmelfarb, *On Looking Into the Abyss* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

31   Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hotlingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), hereinafter cited as *TI*, 23.

32   Archilochus, *Elegies*, 5. See West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci* (Oxford, 1955) and, for the English translation cited, M. L. West, *Greek Lyric Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 14.

33   Archilochus, *Elegies*, 6.

34   For another example, in a provocatively brief declaration, a two point epigram is offered against the iconic image of truth: "'All truth is simple.' – Is that not a compound lie? –." *TI*, 23. The epigram undoes itself here overtly, but here, as it may be claimed in every Nietzschean stylistic case, without dissolving the original contrast. And it is this original contrast that matters.

35   I echo the emphasis drawn by Tracy B. Strong, "Introduction," *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. P. Polt (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

36   Martin Heidegger, "The Thinker as Poet" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. A. Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 14.

37   This assertion converges with (it admittedly does not follow) Jacques Derrida, *Otobiographies* (Paris: Éditions Gallilée, 1984).

38   George Steiner, *Martin Heidegger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 30, 43 ff.

39   Martin Heidegger, *Was heißt Denken?* (Tübingen, 1954), 85; English translation *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. F. D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 131; hereinafter *WhD*.

40 Saying "we are still not thinking" is not "tuned to a key of melancholy and despair" – even if it is not a piece of optimism. If the assertion nevertheless *seems* "tuned in a negative and pessimistic key" (*WhD*, 35), Heidegger argues that that seeming is itself a result of the fact that we are still not thinking. This turns Heidegger from an attention to the keynote to the character or resonant "way in which it speaks." Here Heidegger's musical allusion is overt: "'Way' here means melody, the ring and tone, which is not just a matter of how the saying sounds" (*WhD*, 35).

41 "Hölderlin's method, steeled by contact with Greek, is not devoid of boldly formed hypotactic constructions, parataxes are noticeable as elaborate disturbances that deviate from the logical hierarchy of subordinating syntax. Hölderlin is irresistibly drawn to forms of this sort. The transformation of language into a concatenation, the elements of which combine in a manner different from that of judgment, is a musical one." Theodor Adorno, *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970–86 [20 volumes]), vol. 11, 57. Translation from the citation in Rolf Wiggershaus, *Frankfurt School. Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*, trans. M. Robertson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 528.

42 Holger Schmid reads this passage productively and suggestively, taking Heidegger's account of "showing" (*Zeigen*) as the propriative, ownmost mode of Appropriation: "als eigenster Weise des Ereigens. Diese Weise nun, in der das Ereignis spricht soll nicht Modus, sondern Melos bedeuten: 'das Lied das singend sagt.'" But, Schmid continues to note beyond Heidegger's quiet institution of *melos* as the mode in which Appropriation speaks, that with this invocation of song in reference to Hölderlin a good deal remains to be thought: "Das zuletzt zu Denkende ist also das zu Erfahrende, 'das Lied'." Schmid, *Kunst des Hörens. Orte und Grenzen der hermeneutischen Erfahrung* (Cologne: Bölnow, 1999), 124.

43 This tuning is what Nietzsche meant when he spoke of philosophizing with a hammer – not an invitation to a reign of nihilism or self-assertive, fascist violence but an attunement in accord with Pythagoras' first musing on the differential sounds rung out by hammer blows in the blacksmith's forge: the veritable and still unsounded harmony of the world. For further reflections, see Babette E. Babich, "Between Hölderlin and Heidegger: Nietzsche's Transfiguration of Philosophy" in *Nietzsche-Studien* 29 (2000): 267–301.

44 For a prelude to the music of the poem "Friedensfeier," Hölderlin prefaces the final version with a plea for the reader's kindliness with regard to the poem's language as what must be given voice because such tones not only exist but reflect the untrammeled variety of existence itself: "On a beautiful day, nearly every art of song may be heard, and born of nature, whence they are come, nature it is that receives them again" ". . . *An einem schönen Tage läßt sich ja fast jede Sangart hören, und die Natur, wovon es her ist, nimmts auch wieder.*" "Friedensfeier," Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte* (Wiesbaden: Aula, 1989), 327. See, for a bilingual edition, Hölderlin, *Hyperion and Selected Poems* ed. Eric I. Santnem (New York: Continuum, 1990), 227–8.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CONTRIBUTORS

Amittai Aviram is Associate Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of South Carolina, where he teaches literary theory and poetics. His book, *Telling Rhythm: Body and Meaning in Poetry* (1994), presents a new way of reading poetry. An active metrical poet, he has been developing a theoretical basis for a new formalist criticism.

Babette E. Babich is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Fordham University and Adjunct Research Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University. She is editor of the two volume collection, *Nietzsche and Science*, forthcoming in the *Boston Studies in Philosophy of Science* series, and *From Phenomenology to Thought, Errancy and Desire: Essays in Honor of William J. Richardson* (1996). She is author of *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Science* (1994), as well as various essays on aesthetics, the museum, and continental philosophy of science/technology. Executive Secretary of the Nietzsche Society (US), Babich is also a founding editor (with David Allison) of *New Nietzsche Studies*.

Eve Tavor Bannet is Professor of English and Women's Studies, and Chair of English at the University of Oklahoma, Norman. Her books include *Structuralism and the Logic of Dissent: Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Lacan* (1991), and *Postcultural Theory: Critical Theory after the Marxist Paradigm* (1993).

Stephen Barker is Professor of Arts and Drama at the University of California at Irvine, and Director, EAP Study Center in Lyons/Grenoble (France). He has published widely on Nietzsche, Freud, Derrida, Beckett, Cocteau, Jarry, Faulkner, Arthur Miller, and literary and aesthetic theory and philosophy. He is the author and has edited: *Autoaesthetics: Strategies of the Self After Nietzsche*; *Excavations and Their Objects: Freud and the Collecting of Antiquity*; and *Signs of Change: Premodern, Modern, Postmodern*. Now editing *Interrogating Images*, he has lectured extensively on art, art theory, art history, and the integration of art and society.

Alessandro Carrera is *Lettore*, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the Department of Italian, New York University. He lectures and publishes in the areas of opera; modern poetry; music and literature. He is author of *Il dio del labirinto*, a serial novel (1987); *La torre e la pianura* (1994), a novel in four stories; *La stagione della strega* (1998) which won the "Arturo Loria" Prize for short fiction (Carpi, Italy); and *A che punto è il Giudizio Universale*, twelve short stories (1999), a finalist at the "Settembrini" Prize for short fiction (Mestre, Italy).

Richard Detsch is Professor Emeritus of Modern Languages, University of Nebraska at Kearny. His publications include *Georg Trakl's Poetry* (1993), as well as numerous articles on German poetry and literature.

Karen Feldman is Assistant Professor, Department of Rhetoric, University of California at Berkeley, and was a Fulbright Fellow in Germany (1997–8). Her publications include *Continental Philosophy: An Anthology* (with W. McNeill) as well as articles and reviews in the area of contemporary Continental philosophy.

David Halliburton is Professor of English, Comparative Literature, and Modern Thought at Stanford University. He is the author of *Edgar Allan Poe: A Phenomenological View* (Princeton); *Poetic Thinking: An Approach to Heidegger* (Chicago); *The Color of Sky: A Study of Stephen Crane* (Cambridge); *The Fateful Discourse of Modernity* (Stanford).

Richard Kearney is Professor of Philosophy at University College, Dublin, and Visiting Professor at Boston College and the University of Paris. His many publications include *States of Mind* (1996), *Poetics of Modernity* (1995), *Modern Movements in European Philosophy* (1994), *Poetics of Imagining: Modern and Postmodern* (1991), and *The Wake of Imagination* (1988).

Carlo Sini is Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Milan. He is founding editor of the journal *L'uomo un segno* and the author of numerous books, including studies on phenomenology, semiotics, Whitehead's process philosophy, and American pragmatism. His book *Images of Truth* has been recently translated into English.

P. Christopher Smith is Professor of Philosophy, University of Massachusetts, Lowell. His Ph.D., awarded in 1966, was completed under H. G. Gadamer at the Karl Ruprecht University, Heidelberg. He has translated various books by Gadamer, and his most recent book, on communications theory, is *The Hermeneutics of Original Argument: Demonstration, Dialectic, Rhetoric* (1998).

Forrest Williams is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, University of Colorado at Boulder. His publications include *Marxism and Art: Writings in Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, as well as numerous articles and reviews in contemporary Continental philosophy.

EDITORS

Massimo Verdicchio is Professor of Italian, University of Alberta, Edmonton (Canada). His publications include *Naming Things: Aesthetics, Philosophy and History in Benedetto Croce*; *Of Dissimulation: Allegory and Irony in Dante's* Commedia, as well as translations of works by Massimo Cacciari, Mario Perniola, and Carlo Sini.

Robert Burch is Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Alberta, Edmonton (Canada). He publishes in the areas of German Idealism, phenomenology, and philosophy of technology, in addition to his work on the interplay of philosophy and literature.